

LCTA's Response: We're Still Waiting...

La Canada Unified School District teachers have made sacrifices to maintain fiscal solvency over the last decade and a half as the District has weathered recession. We have accepted minimum salary increases that barely keep up with the cost of living with the consistent promise that more is on the horizon. In the last two years the governor has increased funding for California schools to make up for the lean years. But now that the gap funding is coming in, La Canada Unified teachers are not being compensated. We do not understand why the promise made to us is not being upheld. We want to earn competitive salaries that value the hard work we do to ensure that our students receive the best possible education. **It is time for us to explain our story.**

What salary increases have the teachers received over the past 10 years?

The District claims that we have received a 10% increase over the past three years, but that does not tell the whole story. In fact, the average 1.3% per year increase we have received over the past decade does not even keep up with cost of living increases, STRS obligations, or significant increases to our health benefits premiums.

Previous Salary Agreements Between LCUSD and LCTA:

| 05-06 | 06-07 | 07-08 | 08-09 | 09-10 | 10-11 | 11-12 | 12-13 | 13-14 | 14-15 | 15-16 |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 0% | 0% | 3% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 2% | 4% | 4% | ???? |

Why did IBB end and what does positional bargaining mean?

LCTA stated at the April 19 board meeting that we are committed to Interest-Based Bargaining, and stayed through 9pm on the last night of IBB negotiations demonstrating full faith to that commitment. The District circumvented the process on April 27 and engaged in an unfair labor practice by providing a written proposal through a letter to the Association rather than at the negotiations table. This district-initiated move to positions-based bargaining ended nine years of a joint commitment to the interest-based bargaining process.

After 80 hours of negotiating and working through the details of the budget, the bargaining teams admitted at the close of bargaining on April 26 that neither party fully understood the numbers. Despite this fact, the District's negotiating team delivered an ultimatum to LCTA to sign a tentative agreement or move to positions-based bargaining. We could not agree to a tentative agreement at that time because we did not trust that the district's numbers were accurate. In fact, just hours before being given the ultimatum we discovered errors in the budget and the numbers. These errors left us full of doubt.

We can only guess at the District's reasons for rushing to abandon the interest-based bargaining process. We know that they have felt pressure from our organizing efforts, from teachers, parents, and students speaking out at Board meetings. We know that several of our comparable districts are about to settle their agreements, further widening the salary gap. In fact, Manhattan Beach just agreed to a TA that will raise their top salary to over \$100,000 by January 2017. We know that the Governor's May Revise to the budget is expected to be announced next week, and is likely to free up considerably more money for schools. **We can imagine why the District desires a speedy, if unjust, settlement now.**

What is the District's offer?

According to Wendy Sinnette's press release, the highlights of the District's proposal are:

- A 4.1% retroactive teacher salary increase, the equivalent of \$735,000 in additional salary for 2015-2016.
- Proposed implementation of a collaboratively developed restructure of the Professional Employee Salary Schedule for the 2016-2017 school year. The restructured salary schedule would increase overall teacher salaries approximately 4.3%, an overall increase of approx. \$774,000 (\$2,322,000 for the three-year budget cycle) for the LCTA bargaining unit.

On the surface, this offer may sound reasonable, or even attractive, but here are the flaws in the District's proposal as presented:

- The **4.1% retroactive increase is effectively off schedule**, since the current salary schedule is abandoned next year. This means that this money will not carry forward.
- **The 4.3% overall increase reflects the assumed cost to the District.** The actual increase this restructure would cost the District is 4.08%.
- **But this is not what members will actually receive.** The average member will see only a 2.68% salary increase in the proposed restructure. STRS contributions will increase by 1% of salary next year along with an approximate .5% increase in healthcare premiums. **So the average 2.68% will only appear to be an approximate 1.18% in teachers' paychecks.**

For some LCTA members, this may result in a smaller paycheck in 2016-17 than in 2014-15!

Furthermore, the District's proposal does not meet the common interests identified in our first interest-based bargaining session: increase lifetime earnings, recruit and retain high quality professionals, and develop a salary schedule that is consistent and deliberate.

The District's proposal still leaves La Canada at 5th out of our five comparable districts in terms of lifetime earnings and highest possible salary, and it still takes us longer to reach our highest earnings. While the proposed restructure does "cross the \$90,000 threshold" in year sixteen, years nine through fifteen see meager increases over current earnings. In other words, the District's proposal is effectively a shell game that moves money from teachers at the middle years of the salary schedule to fatten the top end--this is not exactly consistent and deliberate, and not exactly the kind of move that will retain our top teaching talent.

So what do we do next?

In the coming days, LCTA will be presenting a counter offer that does represent our shared interests and presents a fair and meaningful salary increase. Please support this offer and encourage the board to move to settlement in a timely manner. None of us want to continue in an environment of tension and strife. We are eager to return our focus entirely to our classrooms and the students of LCUSD. For now, each out to LCUSD Governing Board members and let them know that we cannot attract or retain high quality educators without increasing pay. **Tell Board members the District's proposed offer is neither fair nor meaningful, and therefore is not acceptable.**

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