

Jan. 18, 2007

School Board meeting

Jay Yerkes, Board President

Vacaville Unified has shown tremendous progress in recent years on virtually every front. Our schools and our students are performing better. Our test scores are up; achievement, across the board, is increasing; our facilities are being upgraded; and our financial house is in order.

This is, in large part, due to the exceptional work of the District's Administrative team. We've made it a policy to operate a very lean administrative structure and have demanded considerable workload from the few administrators, principals, and directors we've employed. As a Board, we very much appreciate their hard work, creativity, and dedication in making Vacaville Unified a successful learning and working environment. We have an excellent team and it shows.

In December, we adopted the final segment of our employee packages. We have reached mutually acceptable agreements with the labor unions for our teachers and support staffs on their new collective bargaining contracts. This was a thoughtful and collaborative, where we worked together to resolve issues and find common ground. In reaching those agreements, the District was guided by two fundamental principles: (1) that our employees get the best salaries we can afford, without jeopardizing the long term fiscal integrity of our budget, and (2) to be competitive in what we pay in order to attract and retain our professionals so we can serve our students and community. And we did accomplish both of these goals when we ratified both of those agreements. Teachers and classified employees received salary increases and bonuses in the range of 7 to 7.6%. In fact, in the past 2 years our teaching staff has received a 10.6% ongoing salary increase, along with a 1% bonus. This is the highest contract settlement of any District in Solano County and represents significant movement towards being more competitive among our neighboring school districts. Our District is committed, as are our unions, to be equitable and competitive. The Board used those principles when it addressed compensation for our District administrative staff. Leadership matters, and in recent years we have become increasingly concerned that we are not maintaining a competitive position among our surrounding school districts in terms of administrative compensation. The impact of that we clearly see in our recruitment process. We have a lot of trouble filling positions. Qualified candidates have not applied because the pay is just not competitive. We recently have had talented professionals take jobs elsewhere in the county because they can receive tens of thousands of dollars more for not working for Vacaville.

The Board made a difficult, but necessary, fiscal decision when we granted our administrators this increase to correct this inequity and competitiveness. Cabinet level Assistant Superintendent I employees in Vacaville Unified are significantly underpaid among our competing districts by tens of thousands of dollars. For equity, with other

Vacaville Unified employees, we gave them a 5% raise, and for competitiveness, we adjusted the base pay schedule by about \$6000 per year for 3 years. This will get them all at the step 2 level. They received a comparable raise to other employees and we have implemented a 3-year reclassification of their position to the Assistant Superintendent 2 level.

The compensation adjustment recognizes the fact that if we have to replace these key employees, we would have to offer significantly higher salaries to attract qualified candidates. The Board of Education firmly believes we should not financially penalize loyal and dedicated leaders who choose to remain with Vacaville Unified. We've heard from our teachers union tonight some figures. Well remember, we have certificated, classified, and administration. All 3 are different for a reason. You cannot compare directly compare them, as you are not comparing apples to apples.

Please keep in mind that any statistic can be stated in such a way so that it benefits a certain point of view. For example #18 on the teachers union list posted on the website could just as easily have been written, "many teachers make more per day than their principals."

The reality here is that we are correcting a blatant inequity. If a tenured teacher with full job security takes an administrative position, they move to an at-will position with no tenure and less salary per day.

All appropriate procedures and public notice requirements were met when the Board considered this item. It was explained in an agenda item for anyone who chose to attend the public meeting in December. The Board met not only the letter of the law, but also the spirit of the law in taking this action. We made a prudent decision to make a fair, equitable, and necessary investment of our limited resources in proven leadership that is getting the job done for our students and our community.

Our highest priority as a School Board is to ensure that we maintain the competitive edge for our students, our employees, and our schools. Through this well-balanced set of compensation packages we have demonstrated our commitment and our respect for the people who best serve the interests of our students every day. With this in mind, we can move forward with a renewed focus on improving student achievement and educational effectiveness in our schools.

Thank you.