



# A Report from our *President*

February 8, 2008



## Dianne GarciaStevens

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I attended the Board of Education meeting Thursday, February 7 and made the following remarks. I will address the Board of Education again Thursday, February 21. Negotiations resume Wednesday, February 20.

Good evening President Mrs. Calderon, Vice President Ms. Guzman, Board members Mr. Vela, Mr. Chau and Mr. Chacon. Good evening Superintendent Velasquez, Cabinet Members, Community and members of the Montebello Teachers Association. My name is Dianne GarciaStevens, President of the Montebello Teachers Association.

Approximately 18 years ago this district faced severe budget challenges. It was because of the severity of these challenges that an important lesson was learned. That lesson, 18 years ago, was, that by ultimately working together, the district and the association became stronger and smarter in handling intense budget challenges. We should never forget what we learned from those times. It was because of what took place 18 years ago that I stand here tonight as the current president of our Association. We should never underestimate or undermine positive working relationships. No one entity can possibly solve the challenges education faces daily. It has been said that history has a habit of repeating itself.

Now let's fast forward to the present. We live in a world that is touched daily by political events. Politicians, decide how much money will fund the important work we do in our classrooms, not the need of our students. Our classrooms are laboratories for political experiments. We and our students are the lab rats dancing to the beat of test scores. In the so called "year of education" our governor is talking about cutting billions of dollars from our public schools and the possibility of suspending Proposition 98 in the next two years. A 4.8 billion dollar cut would mean cutting more than \$24,000 per classroom, reducing per pupil spending by more than \$800, increasing class size by 35% or shutting down every school across the state for nearly a month. These are just a few of the damages this proposal would cause districts throughout this state. We should be working jointly with our legislative representatives on the facts we have and not with the probability of what might be. The Association, as a member of CTA has a proven track record that united; acting as one voice we do make a difference. Our efforts have paid off recently with NCLB. The Miller-Pelosi reauthorization proposal will not be an issue this year.

I am fully aware that you are all well-informed of what the education community is facing. So let's reflect on how this has affected us locally in MUSD. I cannot help but ask my-

self who is on the frontline delivering the instruction and motivating our students to achieve all they can be? Its teachers!!! Our members are the most important resource in every classroom for advancing student learning and achievement. They continue to be asked to do more with less. More than 18 yrs ago parents, students, and teachers sought out homes or employment to be in MUSD. Today, due to factors like unemployment and an unbearable real estate market that is no longer the case.

Are we a priority?

We will continue to be one voice during these negotiations. Together we have the ability to affect our working conditions and the students learning conditions. We are professionals. We see that every day when our members are working collaboratively for their students. How our teaching will affect our students will no doubt change history down the road. Yes, it is a very treacherous road we take today. Each of us must accept the challenge to do their part. As I stated before the members of the Montebello Teachers Association have always been sensitive to the financial needs of the district. What would WE gain by putting the district in a position that would not make us fiscally solvent?

Teachers hear the heartbeat of crisis; they always have time to listen; know they teach to students, not subjects and they are absolutely non-expendable. I am not here tonight to ask if you have any questions because I believe, the one question you have is, does Dianne truly believe, that a raise for the Montebello Teachers Association is possible? Yes, I do. MUSD received COLA and the teachers should not be constrained from receiving one. Do I believe, we can come to a mutual agreement when negotiations resume later this month. Yes I do. The Association and the District have over the years worked toward respecting each other professionally. Do I believe, we, as a district will take the lessons we learned some 18 years ago and profit from those lessons? Yes I do. Someone once said "History is a guide to navigation in perilous times. History is who we are and why we are the way we are".

So, as we continue to make progress on the challenges that are facing us today. Let's not forget it's those in the front-line delivering the instruction that we have all come to depend on AND expect! Let's make students and teachers the priority this school year. Not the Casualty!