



# A Report from our *President*

May 10, 2010



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## Dianne GarciaStevens

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School Boards have the primary responsibility for overseeing the operation of districts. Accountability for the use of public monies is important. At the May 6<sup>th</sup> Board of Education meeting I shared these remarks to our elected school board officials.

This is one of the most difficult times for public education in recent history. Many are suffering because of the merciless slashing of the state budget, with public education taking the brunt. Through all of this, MUSD teachers and the District have worked together like a family.

Negotiations were done in earnest with all parties trying to preserve Bargaining Unit Members. Our district stands as a model of teamwork that other districts would do well to emulate. Hard decisions and many sacrifices had to be made, but in the midst of this struggle we had the privilege of knowing that even though we might represent different points of view, we were on the same team; a team that puts students first, and honors and respects the quality people who do so much for them.

As part of this team, teachers are willing to sacrifice. We are willing to take jobs and leave the school sites that had become our homes. We are willing to accept 14 budget cut days over the course of two years that made us tighten our belts even more. We were told, and thus believed, that every possible sacrifice that could be made was made, and the only reason these sacrifices were necessary was because of this financial hardship.

Our great sense of pride had changed to anger and disappointment at the reality of the creation of an **ADDITIONAL** cabinet-level position that came with a price tag of approximately \$147,000, **plus** a 12.5% salary increase, **plus** the added benefit of having no written job description or defined responsibilities. It is titled "Liaison to the Board of Education." But we all know, by defini-

tion, the liaison to the Board is the Superintendent. This position came out of nowhere, without the input of the community and other stakeholders, and drives a wedge of distrust between us. But the deepest concern is that we appear to be changing the dynamic of cohesive teamwork that has helped us survive every crisis we have faced in the past, including this one.

I appreciate the fact that earlier this evening Mr. Pell requested that he not receive the raise in pay. He must realize how many real necessities could be supplied by this large allocation of funds. You may say this is not a \$160,000 increase, but a mere \$20,000 increase. Nevertheless, in one Board action **YOU** approved this unnecessary position and **YOU** cut bargaining unit member salaries by 3.6%, increased class size, and eliminated more than 100 K-12 positions. It should be noted that **YOUR** cabinet voluntarily initiated a 5% pay cut to stand in solidarity with MUSD's employee organizations. Hopefully the newest cabinet member is willing to take the same 5% cut.

\$20,000 brings to students, after-school tutoring programs, textbooks, supplies, supplementary materials, sports and fine arts programs, intervention programs and reallocation of GATE funds.

As leaders of our respective organizations, especially during these tough fiscal times, we are **ALL** expected to act responsibly and to represent the best interests of the students of MUSD. We still believe the creation of this unnecessary position directly contradicts and violates this most sacred trust.