

Joint Statement
Between
The San Juan Unified School District
And the
San Juan Teachers Association
April 3, 2009

Last month, the District and SJTA began negotiations in an effort to find any silver lining around the dark economic clouds hanging over our district and state. Our goals throughout this stage of “effects” bargaining were to develop positive and practical solutions to a very uncertain and complex set of circumstances. The revenue losses to our district are severe but could be much worse if we don’t make decisions that prepare us for eventualities in advance. Although this was a very difficult task, it was made easier by savings due to the sacrifices of the past three years by all employees and the latest developments regarding the increases in federal funding.

Our first goal is to mitigate layoffs. Unlike previous economic downturns, unemployment continues to spiral upward across the state rather than just in particular pockets. Facing unemployment in these times can be the most devastating of circumstances for anyone. As a result, we are pleased to announce that at least 240 layoffs will be rescinded next week following the April 14 closed session meeting of the Board of Education. This was made possible by the federal stimulus monies and the leveraging of flexibility within the categorical funds including the new regulations overseeing the implementation of Class Size Reduction. At this time the district will be adjusting the class size reduction program for staffing at 23:1 in grades K-3.

Our second goal was to strengthen our position in negotiations with our health plan carriers, Kaiser and PacifiCare. A majority of the Joint Health Care Committee are recommending that all bargaining units have the same plan offerings, which will allow our members to retain current plan options and limit next year’s district cost to increase only 4.2%, down from initial projections of 12.9%. We are preparing to sign a tentative agreement on this issue next week. As annual renewal increases continue to outpace the revenue increases, standardizing plan options for all employees as well as emphasizing wellness programs are critical to achieving cost-effective programs for all employees.

Finally, the parties have agreed to continue to bargain the effects of the economic initiatives on May 19th ballot and the impact of the federal stimulus monies as they become known as well as. And we will continue to make every effort to reduce the number of layoffs even further as our financial condition improves. We believe it is best to prepare for this economic slide to be a bit longer and simultaneously build in the flexibility to adjust quickly to positive or negative changes. Additional details of these issues will be forthcoming in weeks ahead.