

Comments of David Fisher, President of the Sacramento City Teachers Association (SCTA) to the Sacramento City Unified School Board (SCUSD) concerning Agenda Item, 9.1, Report of Unions

Good evening. I'm David Fisher, the president of the Sacramento City Teachers Association.

Two weeks from today, on-line classes will begin here in the Sacramento City Unified School District.

Over the past several months, hundreds of teachers, school nurses, psychologists, librarians, counselors, social workers and others have been working hard to develop a robust Distance Learning program for our District, one that balances the academic and social and emotional needs of our students, parents and educators.

We are living an extraordinary, traumatic time. And our proposal takes that into account.

First and foremost, our proposal ensures that students and staff have the technology with connectivity required to implement a robust Distance Learning program. Technology must be extended to every student, not just every family, and to all staff who will be engaged in Distance Learning, including substitute teachers, instructional aides and others.

Second, along with that technology, staff needs professional development. This training should not just focus on the technological aspects of Distance Learning, but now more than ever we need to confront the institutional racism that affects SCUSD and permeates American society. As we have advocated for nearly five years, all staff should be provided implicit bias training, a board policy that was adopted in 2014 and never implemented. It's time to act.

Third, our proposal provides for instructional minutes and structured daily schedules that meet students academic and social emotional needs and values the professional expertise and judgment of classroom teachers.

Fourth, our proposal provides for an ongoing, structured engagement between teachers and the District to help guide, coordinate and troubleshoot the implementation and development of Distance Learning.

Fifth, our proposal makes use of all available staff, including school nurses, librarians, substitutes, training specialists, and instructional aides to provide the necessary interventions, avoid split classes, and to make Distance Learning as successful as possible under such challenging circumstances.

Sixth, our proposal would make accessible upgraded curriculum options and software to give more online resources to students and teachers.

Finally, our proposal calls for a SmartStart to Distance Learning for the first six days of school to allow for a phased-in implementation. This will allow for the inevitable technical glitches that are sure to occur in the first several days as students, allow time for supply and text book distribution, make sure families are aware of food distribution schedules and for parents and staff become acclimated to this radically changed educational environment.

While the discussion between teachers and the District has been extremely constructive over the past several weeks and the District representatives have expressed a willingness to be truly responsive to teacher input, the District has largely ignored that input into its responses to our proposal.

We are next scheduled to meet on Monday, August 24.

Unfortunately, the District's insistence on moving forward with a PERB hearing on August 27-28 is also impeding our availability to meet. Last week, we made a proposal the District in which we would drop four complaints that PERB has issued against the District, in exchange for the District dropping its single charge against SCTA. Ironically, the District's charge alleges that SCTA has refused to meet for successor negotiations, negotiations that have been underway already for several months.

In addition, SCTA suggested that the parties simply reschedule the PERB hearing after school has commenced so that the parties can concentrate on working together on our Distance Learning program.

Here it should also be noted that the hearing is unlikely to conclude in the two days scheduled for next week and that a decision will not be rendered until sometime in 2021. Moreover, the outcome the District seeks in the charge—to convene successor negotiations—has already occurred.

Because pursuing the charge against SCTA seems so important to the District, postponing the hearing would allow the District to continue to pursue its allegation, while not using up limited days of availability to discuss Distance Learning. The District refused to postpone the hearing.

Unfortunately, the only party that stands to gain in such a scenario is the District's outside consultants, particularly its law firm, Lozano Smith.

Recently, Lozano Smith received between \$2 and \$5 million from the federal Paycheck Protection Program offered by the US government to small business designed to keep them afloat during the turbulent economic times. But is Lozano Smith really struggling?

According to records we just obtained through a California Public Records Act request, SCUSD paid Lozano Smith \$101,106.84 for "labor negotiations" in the spring related to Distance Learning. That \$101,000 expenditure was the third largest single line item expenditure, behind only Chromebooks for kids (that was originally to be paid out of bond dollars) and pre-packaged meals for students.

In surrounding districts, like Natomas, Twin Rivers, San Juan and others, the superintendent participated directly in the negotiations related to Distance learning. It's no coincidence that those districts have reached agreements with their teachers. In recent communication, the superintendent has indicated that "Completing negotiations on the effects of distance learning and moving forward with a robust distance learning program is the District's top priority." And yet, he has not participated in a single discussion with teachers--his "top priority."

Students, parents, and staff are anxious about how classes will resume on September 3. Hundreds of teachers have come together to develop a comprehensive proposal regarding Distance Learning, with a SmartStart to the school year. We are optimistic that District leaders will be responsive to this input and on behalf of the 3000 certificated educators in SCUSD we look forward to implementing a successful Distance Learning program we all can be proud of.