

## Survey Results Are In - What Teachers Think!

Written by Holly Guntermann, Jim Brigham and Jerry Hall

Before the winter break HTA distributed a survey requesting your input before our negotiating team begins the bargaining process. We appreciate the overwhelming response.

Of those who responded to the recommendations for cuts, an overwhelming majority of you felt that the extension to the cabinet level administrators' perks should be rescinded. A nearly equal number felt that the Professional Development Academy and outside educational contractors should be reduced or eliminated and the District employees reassigned.

Ranking third in areas that need to be cut, respondents felt the District should reduce or eliminate extracurricular activities that are paid for by District funds. This includes athletics. It was noted that participants in those programs that remain should be responsible for the cost.

The next item which generated a great deal of interest dealt with District Office expenses. Respondents felt that there should be a significant pay cut for D.O. administrators and that D.O. administrative staff should be reduced. It was also stated that the D.O. should be shut down during the month of July.

Testing was a popular, or should we say unpopular, item. Respondents felt that Benchmark Testing and other District assessments need to be drastically reduced. The concept of a four day week was noted by many. Unfortunately, at this time a four day week is not allowed under California Education Code, except for some alternative education programs.

There were a number of other important issues that were listed by unit members. It was stated that the cost of busing needs to be reduced, and that by altering starting and ending times roughly \$500,000 could be saved. Additionally, many felt that reducing the number of assistant principals would bring significant savings to the District. Another cost saving measure mentioned by many of you was concerning the cost of maintaining landscaping and fields throughout the District.

While this is not a complete list of suggestions, we listed those that had a significant number of responses. It came across loud and clear that unit members expect that the District needs to make significant cuts in the areas listed above before concessions are made by the union.

### State class sizes grow as budget cuts take hold By Anthony York of Capitol Weekly

During the last summer's budget debate, the state greatly reduced the penalties for schools that do not conform to the smaller class size goals. This new flexibility has led many districts to back away from the popular class-size reduction program, simply because of economics.

"I'm a big believer in class-size reduction. I know it works," said state Superintendent Jack O'Connell. "The legislature has created almost a perverse incentive to go to higher class sizes."

O'Connell said the scaling back of class-size reduction, along with other education cuts like eliminating summer school funding and shortening the academic year, will adversely affect students.

"It's not rocket science," he said. "It's going to be harder for our kids, attending school fewer days, in larger classes. Intuitively, it's the exact opposite of what we should be doing."

The class-size reduction program began under Gov. Pete Wilson in 1996. When the state was awash in money, and with the schools' constitutionally guaranteed funds growing rapidly under the Proposition 98 formulas.

The program has never been mandatory, but there have been strong financial incentives for schools to participate. When the program began in 1996, schools received an additional \$650 per child enrolled in a class. By 2007, that number had grown to \$1,071 per child. With that, the cost of the program increased statewide. In the last budget year, California spent \$1.8 billion to keep children in early grades in smaller classes.

But school districts have long complained that the money from the state did not cover the full cost of implementing the smaller class sizes. Additional teachers were needed to staff the smaller classrooms, and the program put strains on school facilities as well.

The program helped lead a statewide hiring boom for teachers. In 1996, there were 249,000 public school teachers in California. By 2002, that number had grown to nearly 310,000, according to data from the California Department of Education. That boom was led by a number of factors including increasing enrollment, and the implementation of class-size reduction.

But when the state economy began to slow down, the money for schools dried up. Offer sheets for new hires were now being replaced by layoff notices as schools struggled to cope with statewide budget cuts. Schools turned to the Legislature to help, in part, by reducing the penalties for having more than 20 students in a K-3 classroom.

Changes to the law made earlier this year weakened the penalties, giving districts less incentive to keep their K-3 classes small. As part of the budget deal, classes between 20.5 and 21.5 students lose only 5 percent of their per pupil funding. A sliding scale exists up to an enrollment of 25 students. Now, if a class has 25 or more students, that class still only loses 25 percent of its class-size reduction funding.

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Districts have been squeezed on the other side as well. As the budget crisis deepened, state support for smaller classes has been pared back. Funding for the program was cut by \$32 million. That meant a small reduction in the per pupil grants given from the state—from \$1,071 to \$1,069, according to stats from the California Department of Education.

The affects of smaller classes on student achievement has been the subject of some debate. But according to information from the U.S. Department of Education, smaller class sizes do indeed improve student performance.

**Deadline is February 5, 2010  
to apply for CTA Scholarships**



***CTA California Teachers Association  
2010 Scholarships***

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**Dependent Children**

Up to thirty-five (35) - \$5,000 Scholarships

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**Del A. Weber Scholarship**

(Dependent Children Attending Continuation High School/  
Alternative Education Programs)

One (1) - \$5,000 Scholarship

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**Members**

Up to five (5) - \$3,000 Scholarships

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**L. Gordon Bittle Memorial Scholarship for Student CTA (SCTA)**

Up to three (3) - \$3,000 Scholarships

***Please go to the CTA web site at [www.cta.org](http://www.cta.org) or  
call HTA at 925-8263 to have a scholarship application sent to you at your site.***



# Retiree Healthcare

## *Now you can live (almost) anywhere*

Last year, for a variety of good reasons, the HTA Insurance Committee decided to begin using Blue Shield, rather than the Foundation, to administer our self-funded PPO plan. One of the big advantages of this change is that Blue Shield has a nation-wide network of providers.

Under the Foundation, if a retiree moved out of California, the health care plan was not feasible since there were no contracted physicians or hospitals outside of California. Retirees who left California were left with the choice of taking the \$3300 provided by the District and then purchasing private healthcare. At the age of 55 to 65 this can be a very expensive proposition.

Blue Shield has providers throughout the United States and even in some foreign countries. This allows retirees to move out of state and continue with their “less expensive” (yes, \$574.19 per month does not sound less expensive) Blue Cross PPO Plan.

If you attended the SERP meeting on January 6, you may have noticed that the handout mentioned the Foundation Plan. That information is no longer correct.

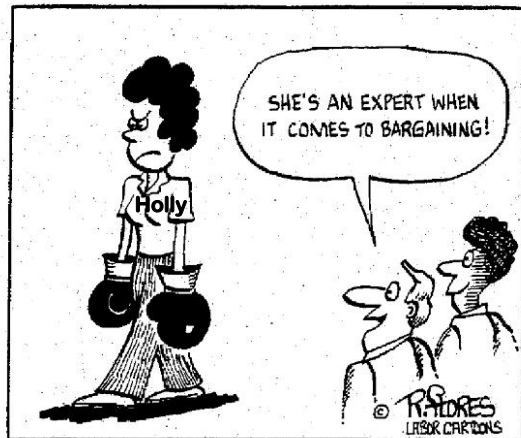
## Looking for a Transfer?

Be Sure to Resubmit a Request EVERY Year!

As stated in your contract:

Article 10.2.4—

Transfer requests shall remain in effect for the school year in which they are made unless the teacher provides written notification to the Personnel Administrator that she/he no longer wants to be considered for transfer. All transfer requests will expire the day before the first instructional day of the new school year.



### Contact Us at:

**Hemet Teachers Association**  
1779 E. Florida Avenue  
Suite B-2 & B-3  
Hemet, CA 92544  
951-925-8263  
www.htaonline.org

**Jerry Hall, President**  
**Jim Brigham, 1st Vice**  
**Nicole Worthington, 2nd Vice**  
**Holly Guntermann, Secretary**  
**Mark Yohe, Treasurer**

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**California Teachers Association**  
**Regional Resource Office**  
25114 Jefferson Avenue  
Murrieta, CA 92562  
951-461-2183

**Patti Bailey, Professional Staff**  
**Karen Bost, Professional Staff**  
**Art Sanchez, Professional Staff**

