

Poway Unified School District

Donald A. Phillips, Ed.D.

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Dear Parents,

I am writing to keep you informed about our overall educational program and the impact of the state budget crisis on Poway Unified. While we have faced budget reductions in five of the last nine years, we have made every effort to keep cuts away from the classroom by finding efficiencies in our system, narrowing our focus, and soliciting parent and community support in terms of donations and volunteerism. Through our collective efforts we have been successful, to date, in minimizing the negative impact of budget cuts on our students' education. We are most appreciative of your support in so many areas.

As one measure of success, our Academic Performance Index ranks among the top 3 school districts in the state with 20,000 or more students, along with Irvine Unified and San Ramon Unified. Our students also excel in everything from robotics to theater and in all extracurricular and co-curricular programs, including athletics. At the heart of this success is our "people," who are dedicated and highly professional, working daily with your children and supporting the overall district operation. They share a commitment to educational quality and seek ways to make the system work, even with all of the staffing reductions. I see evidence of this in our custodians, library clerks, administrative assistants, food service workers, instructional aides, administrators, classroom teachers, and others. Much like hospitals that cannot run with doctors only, schools need support systems to help teachers be effective and to provide a safe and orderly environment. I'm very proud of our staff for their extra efforts during these most difficult financial times.

The 2010-11 school year will be another challenging year financially. Our initial projections for next year included a \$17 million funding reduction due to the continuing state economic problems and the depletion of one-time federal funds, which provided some budget relief this year. In addition, while the Governor announced in January that he would protect public education funding, his proposal would result in a further reduction of over \$2 billion in K-12 funding statewide. For Poway Unified, that translates to a little over \$7 million in additional cuts. Therefore, instead of a \$17 million shortfall, we are now addressing a potential \$24 million challenge out of a budget of approximately \$235 million.

We have already made dramatic cuts in district and school site management staff, as well as classified and support personnel and programs. Since my arrival in 2001, Superintendent's Cabinet positions were reduced from 8 to 4 by refining our work. In a similar vein, we have made deep cuts in all support services. I share this so that you may better understand that we are running out of support functions to cut while keeping the doors open and ensuring the safety of your children.

As one example of our efforts to manage these difficult times, we have implemented with our teachers' union (Poway Federation of Teachers) a very successful early retirement incentive for next year. This will not save the district money, but it will reduce the number of layoff notices. We will obviously continue to look for additional solutions. Nevertheless, most class sizes will increase and we will enter into negotiations around potential further concessions in total compensation. We are also exploring the potential of a shortened student school year from 180 to 175 days. As you know, our district was one of a handful in the state in which teachers, managers, classified members (CSEA), and the school board voted overwhelmingly to all take a 2.7% salary rollback this year. I deeply appreciate their sacrifice.

As we enter into the 2010-11 budget development process, we will be using the following criteria to help us prioritize our resources:

- Support college readiness initiatives and high expectations for all students
- Focus on student learning and student support systems
- Provide a safe and orderly environment
- Continue to seek ways to increase efficiency and effectiveness in operations
- Support and, wherever possible, minimize staff losses

I also need to share that the Governor and legislature could make even further cuts to our funding for next year. It is essential that, as parents, you help our legislators understand how these deep cuts are impacting your children's education and the importance to California's future of a highly educated work force.

While next year will be even more challenging than this year, great people and great organizations rise to great challenges. Our staff is committed to doing their very best with the constraints they face from such deep budget reductions over multiple years. We will need to work collectively to address these additional cuts because of our belief in the importance of the education of your children.

Sincerely,
Don Phillips, Superintendent