

February 10, 2015

Good evening President of the Board White, Clerk of the Board Blough, Board Trustees, Dr. Peplinsky and Staff.

Well, here we are in February – the beginning of RIF season. For the trustees new to the school board, RIF means Reduction in Force, which is the technical term for sending out lay-off letters. This year RIF letters will be sent to an anticipated 25+ classroom teachers.

Unfortunately, this has become a yearly event in Simi starting in the late 2000's. The fact is that some teachers have received a lay-off notice every year that they have worked in Simi, going back 7 or 8 years.

Although we have done a good job hiring back almost every RIF'd teacher in the past few years, this year we have no guarantee that will be the case because of our continued declining enrollment.

If we drop 500 students, we will need less teachers. It's that simple. The only way to bring back our RIF'd teachers is to have open teaching positions due to retirements or resignations.

Last year we were able to bring back everyone who received a RIF notice because the prior school board approved a retirement incentive that was well received and taken by over 40 teachers. These retirements created the job openings needed to return our newer staff, the RIF'd teachers.

What do we do this year to create job openings? Or next year when we are once again projected to drop another 500 students?

You have to ask yourself two questions:

Can we afford to offer an incentive to encourage teachers to retire?

Can we afford to NOT offer an incentive and lose quality teachers to other districts? We don't want to lose our employees to other districts who aren't experience declining enrollment to the extent that Simi is declining.

I don't have a crystal ball with all of the answers. I only know that, as a district, we need to work together to come up with a solution that addresses this issue for the upcoming school year, as well as future years of projected declining enrollment.

Perhaps, we need to adopt a business practice whereby, if our district finds itself in a position to RIF, than a retirement incentive is negotiated.

Tomorrow afternoon, the SEA bargaining team is scheduled to meet with the District bargaining team for negotiations. I hope that this board will have a meaningful discussion with district staff on how to approach the issue of reducing positions without sacrificing our newer staff.

As always, thank you for listening.