

Esteemed BVUSD school board members, management team and community members--

I would like to say thank you for the opportunity to address you all today. If you don't know me, my name is Jeanné Gardner and I am here representing the Bear Valley Education Association as their union president. First and foremost, I am an educator, currently teaching 6th grade math, science, and computer coding at Big Bear Middle School; this is my 25th year in the classroom.

This has been a very challenging 20 months, as you are all well aware, especially for teachers. The 2021-2022 school year has been unique in many ways, and every teacher can attest to our biggest challenge: mitigating the learning loss created by distance learning for many of our students. It is a monumental task. I realized recently how serious this issue is while reading an article online that reminded me that our current 7th graders have not had a full "normal" school year since 4th grade. I've also had conversations with primary teachers, particularly those teaching first and second grade, who had students at the beginning of this year who didn't know how to use primary ruled paper or pencils or scissors correctly because they either forgot how or were never taught those skills until coming back to school in person. I point this out to you because I hope you understand that no standardized test score or benchmark score is going to accurately measure the importance of the in-person instruction that our teachers give each day, especially for our neediest children. So when it's time to analyze test scores and assess the effectiveness of this year's teachers, I ask that you remember to give not only the students, but the teachers, the grace they deserve.

Today, you will be asked to approve a Memorandum of Understanding which has been agreed upon by BVUSD management and BVEA leadership. This MOU was written with three purposes in mind:

- 1) To listen to and respond to the needs of our teachers
- 2) To encourage district management to hire more substitute teachers and fix the problems created by a coverage shortage in our schools
- 3) To show a small appreciation for our teachers by financially recognizing the extraordinary work they are doing during these unprecedented times

In case you haven't had the opportunity to read the MOU, to summarize, we are asking for a temporary increase in pay for teachers when it is necessary for them to cover their colleagues' classes in addition to their own. At the elementary level, this looks like classes being split and extra students added to other classrooms for either a portion of or the entire day, which is a huge disruption to educational programs. At the secondary level, this looks like teachers having to substitute teach during their preparation period. Both of these practices cause additional strain and stress on students and teachers, and often results in teachers having to work above and beyond their duty day to complete daily tasks outside of instruction, even more than usual. Elementary teachers have never been compensated for this practice in past years. Secondary teachers have been earning the district hourly professional development rate of \$41.24 per hour to do this coverage, but we have NOT earned our per diem rate, which is our personal hourly rate based on the salary schedule which is usually reserved for times when we work with students, which we ARE doing when we substitute teach. In order to compromise on the rate of pay, we have accepted a flat rate of \$60 per hour, which is approximately 1.45 times the district professional development rate. Elementary teachers will split this money between them if the class is split 2 or more ways. This is dependent, of course, on your approval, so I ask that you please take into consideration our current workloads and accept the MOU as written. Also, I wanted to thank you for accepting the idea I brought to management for resident subs, which has both helped with coverage issues and brought additional supervision and intervention support to our sites.

Even though teachers may have differing opinions about mask and vaccine mandates and other political issues, we are united as a general membership about our primary concern: our students and their health, safety, and progress in education. Thank you so much for trusting us with our community's most valued resource: its children. I also appreciate your time and look forward to addressing you again in the near future.