

**Santa Ana Unified School District –  
Building Trust in Our Ability to Keep Class Size Reduction**  
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No Fraud or deceit has been committed in Santa Ana Unified School District's (SAUSD) Class Size Reduction program implemented in grades K through 3 and 9 since 1996. Moreover, at no time have false rosters or reports been submitted to the State in an effort to secure funding as suggested in a string of recent *LA Times* articles — the latest being *Santa Ana Class-Size Dispute Widens, April 3, 2007*.

In fact, SAUSD has proactively hired an independent audit firm to ensure that we are compliant with State regulations, and we are prepared to take any necessary actions to correct inadvertent mistakes that might have occurred. Approval of the independent auditor will go before the Board of Education on April 10. In addition, if at any time schools and/or teachers felt unable to fulfill the obligations of meeting the voluntary program, they were relieved of that obligation.

Santa Ana School District for the first time in 25 years has returned to a traditional calendar. Historically with a year-round school calendar, we had experienced a loss in enrollment in January at the elementary level. This year for the first time in a number of years, we sustained our student enrollment at some elementary schools. Our traditional process, had we enough classroom space, would have included forming new classes with a new teacher to continue Class Size Reduction (CSR).

**Substitute Teachers Hired to Ease Burden**

Because we did not have the classroom space in order to meet CSR requirements, long-term substitutes were assigned to 27 of the District's 36 elementary schools where classrooms exceeded the 20-to-1 ratio. The intent of the district was to use substitute teachers to satisfy the State approved Option 2, an approach which includes reducing class size for half of the student's instructional time by bringing a second teacher into the classroom for half of the student's instructional day (approximately 100 minutes). According to State guidelines, this option permits credentialed teachers to assist in classrooms where they are not the principal teachers to be counted for Class Size Reduction to the extent that instruction is in reading and math.

To meet this option, the District hired about 55-60 substitute teachers to assist in lowering class sizes at some elementary schools. Class Size Reduction, Option 2, has been implemented at 27 of our 36 elementary schools.

**Team Teaching Not Working as Intended**

Recently, the District learned of concerns related to the program's implementation at a few schools and that it simply was not working. Some factors that contributed to the events include the experience of an abnormal amount of teacher absences over a span of a

few weeks and the lack of daily substitutes to backfill these spots to adequately cover daily classroom instruction. Instead of using substitutes as intended for the implementation of Class Size Reduction under the teaming approach, the substitutes were being used to cover teacher absences. To further exacerbate the issue, miscommunication ensued over the creation and use of rosters to track instructional time substitutes spent with students. Any confusion on the use of rosters has been clarified.

### **Enduring the Test of Time Based on Legacy**

Founded in 1888, Santa Ana Unified School District is the oldest and largest district in Orange County with 55,000 students, and 5,000 employees. Yes, we have faced political, financial, and educational challenges, particularly in the past five years. Despite this, our mission of providing the best possible education to our students in a supportive, learning environment remains a priority.

As Superintendent, it is my charge to take the appropriate measures to keep our integrity and reputation intact so that we can hold our heads high while preserving and protecting the precious educational experience for our student body. In the three months of my tenure, you have seen evidence of this in recent efforts led by my staff along with our Board of Education. These efforts have enabled the District to retain a positive financial certification and to remain a fiscally-sound, \$500 million yearly operation by stepping up to initiate \$21 million in needed budget cuts for the 2007/08 school year.

### **Involving the Community, Teachers, Parents and Administrators**

We did not accomplish this task alone, however. We involved our community, teachers, parents and administrators working along side each other for weeks on end. It is because of our commitment to seeing to it that students of Santa Ana receive the best possible education that we pledge to work through this issue on Class Size Reduction. Our intention is not one of deceit, fraud or misuse. We would not jeopardize the District on any levels in this manner. Nor would we compromise staff by asking them to do anything illegal or unethical.

We add our assurance to teachers, parents, students and those with a vested interest in the well-being of the Santa Ana community that we are determined to uncover the facts of what occurred and to take steps to make sure that inappropriate actions do not take place in our practices and that we certainly do not violate the law. We as District administration will take full responsibility for any mistakes that have transpired.

Ultimately, the District is committed to serving the students of our community. It is our hope that we can continue Class Size Reduction in grades 1 through 3. What's crucial is that we realize the importance of restoring the trust of staff and the community within the capability of school administrators. By providing CSR in K-3, SAUSD hopes to lay a strong foundation of learning and achievement for our young students so that they may experience success in all facets of their lives.