



Answers to Questions Recently Asked Concerning Teacher Negotiations

Question #1: Is it true that following the tax payers' support of Question 3A in 2002 the district did not fund an increase in teachers' salaries to make them competitive as promised?

Answer: This is not accurate. In fact, BVSD teacher salaries are competitive and they have increased substantially since 2002. BVSD fulfilled both the spirit and the letter of what voters approved in 2002, which states that we will: "attract and retain high-quality teachers and support staff by maintaining competitive salaries and benefits."

Question #2: Is it true that on September 17, the BVSD negotiating team offered a 1% cost of living adjustment (COLA) with an additional two hours per week workload?

Answer: This is incorrect. The 1% COLA is not connected to any other items up for negotiation. Each proposal made by the District stands alone. The actual language of the BVSD proposals is on our website (www.bvdsd.org) for review. The two additional days of professional development are voluntary and are paid for with federal stimulus money. Teachers would not need to work those days to receive the 1% COLA.

Question #3: Is it true that BVSD is fully funded this year including \$9 million new dollars?

Answer: This statement is false. While the school finance act in 2009 included 'inflation + 1%' language regarding the funding of Colorado school districts, the act also restricted the use of those additional funds. Also, the governor's office, in a meeting on August 24, stated that the money "set aside by school districts from the 09/10 State Education Fund will be taken back by the legislature." The amount the state is planning to take back from BVSD in the 2009-2010 school year is \$3.8 million. Both of these items are clear evidence that the school district will not be "fully funded" in this fiscal year. It is inaccurate to claim that full funding includes restricted funds and a promise by the state to take those funds back.

Question #4: Did the Superintendent disregard the advice of the professional staff regarding the projected student count and set an unrealistic low student count thereby underestimating revenue by an additional \$3+ million dollars?

Answer: No. Each year, BVSD uses a system of enrollment projections called a "cohort survivor model." This practice is standard for school districts nationally. Essentially we develop student enrollment models based on historical enrollment trends. BVSD Planner Glen Segrue always develops three trend lines: an optimistic enrollment projection, a middle-of-the-road projection, and a conservative one. This year, the Superintendent's Cabinet deliberated regarding this choice and reached consensus about selecting the conservative projection. This was the strong recommendation of Mr. Segrue, Budget Director Bill Sutter, and Chief Financial Officer Leslie Stafford. No staff member recommended otherwise. Fortunately, BVSD's projection was below the number of students who actually enrolled. Ironically, had the District hit the enrollment spot-on, it would have staffed schools with more teachers in the spring and it would not have had additional funds available in the fall to change its offer of a 1% stipend to a 1% cost of living increase (COLA).

Question #5: Isn't it true that BVSD is able to spend reserve money that is normally locked by TABOR and that the legislature has given BVSD further flexibility in previously required transfers to other funds?

Answer: This statement is true. The law did change which allows school districts to use school buildings as collateral for their TABOR reserve, meaning that BVSD could, if it wanted, use its reserves for teacher compensation. However, this only generates one-time money, which means it could not use it to fund ongoing obligations. Further, BVSD currently receives favorable bond ratings when it borrows money because the District holds cash reserves. This translates into lower interest payments for BVSD taxpayers when the District

issues debt. BVSD holds cash reserves because it is the responsible thing to do. Spending its cash reserves on teacher compensation is a one-time strategy that would put the district in serious financial risk. No prudent businessperson would recommend such action.

Question #6: Why, if as the Superintendent states, “The budget is a value statement,” are teachers’, counselors’ and paraeducators’ salaries are at the bottom of the budget?

Answer: The premise of this question is partially true and partially false. Superintendent Chris King does believe that the BVSD annual budget is a value statement. The District spends more of its general fund on the salaries of teachers, counselors, and paraeducators than any other single item which demonstrates that the district does value teachers highly. This value can be expressed by either paying teachers more or by hiring more teachers. This year’s budget expresses the importance of keeping people in their jobs and keeping class size as small as possible. BVSD has opted to use scarce resources to hire as many teachers as possible rather than paying teachers as much as possible. The Superintendent believes this is a community value, and he heard as much from the community during the numerous budget meetings he held as well as through the results of the budget survey BVSD commissioned.

Question #7: Even though the BVSD superintendent did not take a salary raise this year, didn’t he receive his \$7,500 bonus?

Answer: This is incorrect. Under his contract, the Superintendent is eligible for up to \$15,000 annually as a performance bonus. In December 2008, the Board awarded him \$7,500 as part of his 2008/09 contract. This year, he has not been offered a bonus, and if he is offered one, he has stated that he will not accept it.

Question #8: Didn’t BVSD principals and assistant principals received a contract that will require the district to spend 2.4% of new funds for administrative raises up to 17% while telling teachers, counselors and paraeducators not to expect a pay increase due to the economy?

Answer: No. In June, BVSD administrators settled for steps plus a 1% stipend, which was the same offer on the table for teachers at that time. Principals and assistant principals cannot access the additional days offered to teachers with federal stimulus money, so the compensation they have received is definitely less lucrative than that of teachers. Additionally, steps for administrators are 1.67 % annually. The average step for teachers is 2.2%. No one has told teachers, counselors, and paraeducators not to expect a pay increase due to the economy. All these employees have been offered raises.

Question #9: After BVSD and BVEA began “good faith” negotiations three years ago to design and implement the professional pay schedule (PSS) sought by BVEA, didn’t the District change direction without notice late last May?

Answer: No. On April 17, 2007, the District and BVEA negotiations team met to review the negotiated salary formula that was currently in place during a two-year agreement and agreed to a memorandum of understanding (MOU) that stated, “...The District and BVEA will also agree to a joint letter from Dr. Garcia and Mark Chavez to explore ideas and provide information regarding the salary schedule through the RBO process to begin no later than August 15, 2007 and conclude by March 1, 2008.” The committee met throughout the 2007-08 school year and reviewed a variety of different ways to alter the current salary schedule and reviewed a “supposal” schedule presented by BVEA.

In the 2008-09 BVEA agreement the parties agreed to the following: “...For 2008-09 the first session to discuss a professional salary schedule and language issues shall be held no later than January 15th and end by April 1.” During the negotiations session in the spring of 2009, continued discussion occurred on the professional schedule but there was no agreement. An early proposal from the District offered a three-year transition to a version of a \$40 thousand starting teacher salary schedule, however this was rejected. In late April 2009, when the Colorado legislature created the requirement for districts to set aside part of the funding for districts in a fiscal emergency reserve (\$3.8 million for BVSD), the offer changed to a one-year offer as the three-year transition offer would not have the necessary funding to support it.

Question #10: Isn't it true that BVSD's offer in the spring containing the offer of a 1% stipend would have made BVSD teachers the lowest paid in the metro area?

Answer: No. BVSD teachers are not the lowest paid in the metro area. The following chart shows the districts in the Denver metro area and the 26-year earning power of those districts for 2008-09. BVSD ranks number 7 of the 14 metro districts compared.

2008-09 Teacher Salary Analysis

District Salary over 26 yrs Rank

Cherry Creek \$1,534,074 1

Aurora \$1,523,261 2

Adams Five Star \$1,488,407 3

Jeffco \$1,482,425 4

Englewood \$1,479,955 5

Mapleton \$1,478,509 6

BVSD \$1,474,189 7

Littleton \$1,450,089 8

Douglas County \$1,426,619 9

Brighton 27J \$1,390,571 10

Sheridan \$1,387,963 11

Adams 14 \$1,385,602 12

St. Vrain \$1,376,903 13

Denver \$1,368,135 14

Adams 50 \$1,346,123 15

(Data from 2008-09 School Board Support Services)

Salary comparisons for the BA and MA levels for 2009-10 show the following:

Base Salary BA Step 1 2009-2010

Adams 50 \$40,500 1

Denver \$37,551 2

Aurora \$37,295 3

Cherry Creek \$35,634 4

Brighton 27J \$35,518 5

Littleton \$34,234 6

BVSD (with 1%) \$33,853 7

Douglas County \$33,587 8

Poudre Fort

Collins \$32,883 9

Adams Five Star \$32,024 10

St. Vrain \$32,021 11

Thompson \$32,329 12

Base Salary MA Step 1 2009-2010

Adams 50 \$51,131 1

Aurora \$41,556 2

Denver \$41,207 3

Cherry Creek \$39,910 4

Littleton \$38,206 5

Brighton 27J \$37,882 6

Douglas County \$37,419 7

BVSD (with 1%) \$36,561 8

Poudre Fort Collins \$36,155 9

Adams Five Star \$35,867 10

Thompson \$35,325 11

St. Vrain \$35,223 12

(Districts compared identified as the comparable districts in the 2005 BVSD Salary Study conducted by Segal, Inc.)

In the August-September 2009 Colorado Education Association (CEA) Journal, Research Director Rob Kellogg wrote an article on whether teacher pay in Colorado is keeping up with the cost of living. He cites that in comparing Denver Metro area school districts for overall purchasing power, “Only two of the 10 (Boulder and Westminster) saw purchasing increases when evaluated using both the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) average teacher salary data and CEA data for the negotiated MA+Step 10 on the salary schedules.”

Question #11: Hasn't BVSD posted and communicated misleading information regarding their proposals?

Answer: No. It's hard to answer a question like this because there are no specifics offered whatsoever. Our official position regarding negotiations is on our website (www.bvsd.org) under the “Negotiations Update” tab. BVSD administration stands behind all assertions of fact presented there. If there is a specific question about the accuracy or honesty of any information presented by BVSD, please let Superintendent Chris King know immediately at superintendent@bvsd.org. The District works hard in its communications to be as accurate and fair as possible.

Question #12: Did BVSD conduct a poll that reported only 3% of the BVSD parents think the district administration is doing a good job?

Answer: This statement is inaccurate. BVSD did conduct a poll through a Boulder-based research firm in June 2009. In the survey, respondents were asked, “Regardless of what you think of the quality of education provided by the Boulder Valley Schools, how would you rate the job the school district administration is doing in operating the district efficiently?” Thirty-eight percent (38%) said district administration was doing a “good” job. Three percent responded by stating “great” job. General community members were polled, not just BVSD parents. BVSD has, at BVEA's request, shared this document with association leadership in September. It is available to anyone who requests it. BVSD conducts polls like this almost annually to gauge community readiness for future override and bond elections, but we don't generally publish the results - good, bad, or otherwise.

Question #13: Denver Public Schools received a 2.5% raise this school year; Aurora Public Schools received a 2.5% raise; and Summit County Schools received a 5.63% Increase. In addition to being one of the lowest paid districts in the metro area, isn't BVSD one of the most administratively top heavy?

Answer: This statement is partially true and partially false. While a number of growing districts and those with mill levy overrides for compensation were able to give larger cost of living increases, BVSD is pacing with other similar districts with no pattern of on-going student growth or a recent voter approved mill levy to support additional compensation as with Aurora and Denver Public Schools. Summit County Schools provides higher compensation due to high cost of living in the resort mountain areas. Again, BVSD is not one of the lowest paid districts as referenced earlier. Regarding its status as “administratively top-heavy”: BVSD's Education Center is lean compared to other school districts in the area. BVSD has a high administrator to pupil ratio because it runs schools small. Lots of small schools equates to lots of principals and assistant principals.

Question #14: Since BVEA saved the district \$1,000,000 by reducing health plan coverage, does this mean employees will now have to make up this cut in benefits?

Answer: This statement is false. The overall increased cost in health coverage for the 2009-10 school year for all BVSD employees was approximately \$2.3 million. The District increased its contribution to an average of \$5,980 (up from \$5,238 in 2008-09) for Health, Dental, Life, and Employee Assistance Program (EAP) benefits per employee per year. Through the negotiations process the BVSD and the BVEA negotiations teams agreed to this increase of approximately \$1.1 million in ongoing funding and \$1.2 million in one-time money (from Kaiser and the dental fund). With this increased funding the district fully covers the employee only.