
Subject: NEWS RELEASE: San Diego Unified School Board Balances Budget with No Increases in Class Size
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From: SDUSD Information Office <sdcs-info@sandi.net>

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To:

Subject: NEWS RELEASE: San Diego Unified School Board Balances Budget with No Increases in Class Size

San Diego Unified School Board Balances Budget with No Increases in Class Size

Approves early retirements, other strategies to reduce layoffs; Unanimous vote protects long-term fiscal health of district's schools

SAN DIEGO (February 28, 2017) – A unified Board of Trustees tonight voted 5-0 to keep class sizes small at San Diego Unified, while eliminating a more than \$124 million structural deficit the district was facing. Trustees also approved an early retirement package and other measures designed to save money and minimize the need for layoffs. The Board expressed confidence the vote will put the county's largest school district on a firm financial footing for the future.

"San Diego students are achieving more than ever with some of the highest graduation rates and test scores in the state, so our entire focus has been on protecting the supports for students that are producing these great results," said Board President Richard Barrera. "The package we approved tonight protects these gains, while ensuring the long-term fiscal stability of our district."

Board Vice President Kevin Beiser said the plan approved tonight is fiscally responsible, as it balances the budget without increasing class sizes, while maintaining the district's commitment to offering music and arts programs and other core initiatives. He also noted the Board took action tonight to minimize layoffs.

"We are confident the package of early retirement incentives and other initiatives passed tonight will minimize staff layoffs," said Vice President Beiser.

San Diego Unified has stressed any staff reductions will not come at the expense of increased class sizes. Thanks to the contract negotiated with the San Diego Education Association (SDEA), San Diego Unified students will continue to be guaranteed some of the smallest class sizes of any large district in the state:

- Transitional Kindergarten - Grade 3: No more than 24 students per class on average
- Grades 4-5: No more than 35 students per class
- Higher grades: No more than 36 students per class

"We know children learn best in classroom settings with fewer students, so we felt it was important to protect our small class sizes," said Trustee Michael McQuary.

The plan for school stability, approved by the Trustees tonight, makes significant progress towards resolving the structural deficit faced by the district. In addition to eliminating the projected deficit for the 2017-18 school year, the vote means the deficit for the following year will be half. Further, it demonstrates strong resolve by Board members to confront the structural deficit once and for all.

“I believe it is very important that students and parents know they can count on our outstanding schools and instructional programs being there to serve them in the future,” said Trustee John Lee Evans. “The vote tonight paves the way for the long-term fiscal stability of the district.”

The Board’s newest member, Trustee Sharon Whitehurst-Payne, said she is also pleased to see the district confronting head-on the structural deficit it has faced for years. She said the vote tonight means community members can look forward to the coming school year with confidence.

“We want parents to know our schools will be there to serve them in the future. Our commitment to have quality schools in every neighborhood is rock solid,” said Whitehurst-Payne.

Superintendent Cindy Marten thanked the Board for their strong vote in support of school stability and praised their willingness to tackle the structural budget issues.

“Our challenge has been to maintain all the great programs that we know are working and the climate our students deserve, while protecting the long-term health of our schools,” said Superintendent Marten. “The program approved tonight does that, and allows our entire staff and team of professional educators to focus on delivering another amazing school year for the students we serve.”

Several board members also noted the State of California continues to rank near the bottom of the nation in per pupil funding and pledged to continue advocating for increased funding from Sacramento.

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