



Berkeley Federation of Teachers

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Dear BFT Member,

I want to welcome you to the 2016-2017 year. I hope you had a rejuvenating and relaxing summer break!

We are happy to report that **our Union is strong as we head into this new school year**. Our members are experiencing a 10% increase in compensation over a two-year period. After the 4% raise last year and the increase in the district contribution to benefits, **this year members will receive a 2% raise and a 3% one-time bonus in the end-of-September check**. There is also a small increase in the district contribution to benefits for most BFT members, effective 1/1/17.

We are happy to also report that joint Union advocacy has led to a likely decision by the School Board (they will vote 8/24) to move to CalPERS for BUSD medical benefits. **This will lower the costs for members on a family plan, and will offer affordable non-Kaiser options**. Every employee will need to re-enroll in benefits this fall, so keep an eye out for important information from BUSD about this process.

BFT continues to fight hard for quality public education for all students. BFT organizes very well attended, and respected, community events on the schools our students deserve. Keep an eye out for announcements of this year's events!

We also continue the fight for adequate funding of schools, and the 2016 November election is the most important election in this regard in the last ten years. This fall Berkeley voters will decide if our **BSEP special parcel tax, which provides 20% of our district's revenue and pays for one out of every three teachers**, will be renewed. In addition, voters across California will vote on **Proposition 55**, the extension of the Proposition 30 taxes on the wealthiest Californians.

Prop. 30 meant an end to deep cuts to local school budgets, teacher and classified layoffs, and declining wages for employees. The funds allow us to begin to restore resources teachers need to teach and students need to learn. It is vital that we do not hand our wealthiest citizens a \$5 million tax break when California does not yet meet the average national funding per student. We need to pass Prop. 55 this November!

BSEP is critical to our ability to provide a well-rounded education that serves all students. **It pays for class size reduction, our library program, our music program in grades 4-8, middle school counselors, parent liaisons, support for struggling students, and much, much more**. Failure to pass the 2016 BSEP measure would cause massive layoffs and deep program cuts that would

severely impact students. Passage of BSEP will secure these vital services for students for the next 8 years.

In addition, **we need to re-elect School Board members Beatriz Leyva-Cutler and Judy Appel.** These incumbent board members have a progressive vision of education, and are deeply focused on equity and closing our achievement gaps.

Because of the absolutely critical nature of the November 2016 election, with **over \$35 million per year in funding on the line for BUSD**, we are asking every BFT member to volunteer 1-2 hours of your time this fall. When we engage in the fight for public education we gain immense credibility and goodwill in our community. **We build power for our Union** that helps BFT to negotiate the best possible working conditions and compensation for our incredible teachers.

Please complete the enclosed volunteer sign-up form and return it to BFT via email at bft4tchr@lmi.net. You will be provided with detailed information and reminders.

BFT will be consulting with members on vital topics throughout this year. We are moving to primarily email communication, and will want your feedback. **We will be negotiating a new contract this year and we will need our members' activism and involvement in order to achieve the best possible outcome at the bargaining table.**

Our successes always come from one source: **An informed and ACTIVE membership.** Please be sure to read the periodic communications from BFT, and to turn to your Site Rep for any questions or concerns. With your activism and support we can continue to advocate for excellent teaching and learning conditions.

Wishing you an excellent 2016-2017 school year!

In Unity,



Cathy Campbell
President, BFT

P.S. I hope you will take the time to read about our **key accomplishments of 2015-2016**, and about the fabulous ways the **Berkeley Public Schools Fund** supports BUSD teachers.