

LVEA TODAY



Welcome Back!

LVEA has already started its site visits and we're totally impressed with all the positive energy that is geared toward students. You have a ton on your plate this school year (like last year and the year before that and the year before that...) with new curricula, ELA pilots, new elementary report cards, new RtI strategies in all grade levels, new administrators at some sites, a renewed focus on the whole student and much more! Whether you're a teacher, counselor, psychologist, speech pathologist, nurse or other support staff, YOU are the first responder to meet the needs of our students. YOU deliver the vital curricula and services that our students need. YOU are the expert in the trenches. YOU meet EVERY student's challenges head on. YOU have made the commitment to dedicate your life to working directly with our students. YOU make a huge difference in your students' lives. LVEA thanks you for your long-term dedication - YOU cannot be replaced!

Your paycheck will be a bit higher this school year. The LVEA Negotiations Team worked very hard this summer to get all certificated employees a much needed 2% salary increase along with two extra paid Professional Development days. We especially want to thank your Negotiating Team members for their hard work on your behalf. Joanne Kress is your Negotiations Chair and she leads the team of Ian Godburn, Lisa Hatfield, Darci Miller, Joan Woods, Christine Zahka and Jake Anderson (CTA staff).

These efforts were made against the District's warning of future financial challenges. The District remains concerned even though:

- We have very large reserves, more than neighboring districts
- The State continues to provide one-time funds, with no end in sight, that are not factored into LVUSD's future yearly operating results
- LVEA and CTA successfully campaigned for the passage of Proposition 55 last November that will ensure essential funding from the State until 2030

Given the limited, new, ongoing money from the state, this increase was fine until:

The Board Generously Extended Dr. Dan's Contract!

Just after approving our modest increase, the Board announced that it would extend Dr. Stepenosky's contract another three years after this school year; i.e. through June 2021. While we are only guaranteed 2% for this school year, the Board has provided for yearly increases of 3% this year and 4% in each of

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the three following years. That's a 15.86% cumulative, compounded salary increase PLUS a \$10,000 retention bonus that he'll receive this month. One justification used by the Board is that his salary is "near the bottom" of a small cherry-picked list of wealthy districts that includes Beverley Hills, Palo Alto, San Marino, Redondo Beach, Santa Monica Malibu and Manhattan Beach. That's like saying that the house prices in Agoura Hills are near the bottom of this list of well-heeled areas...but that doesn't make Agoura Hills homes cheap, let alone remotely affordable for the vast majority of our employees!

Not About Dan

As mentioned in our recent News Release, Board Meeting comments and Acorn article, this is not a personal attack on Dr. Stepenosky. LVEA has repeatedly stated that he's a good superintendent. After two years of collaboratively rebuilding morale, LVEA feels that the Board conveyed the wrong message by approving such a generous salary increase for our superintendent just weeks after providing a modest increase for employees that hardly keeps up with inflation.

Messaging, Optics, Respect and Hurt Feelings

The Board and District Management work with Dr. Stepenosky more than anyone, so we understand that they want a leader that meets *their* needs. Our employees spend our days working with students. We feel that we're critical in inspiring our students to learn, think, grow, communicate, cope, etc. Many of us could go into administration but choose to remain engaged and focused with our students. We feel that we make a critical, positive difference, yet the Board's message seems to be that one executive is far more important. We've heard comments from members like "we feel disrespected," "bad optics," "it's insulting," and "it feels like a slap in the face." It seems there's a theory that as long as there's a strong and highly paid executive in the district office, that all the employees will simply fall into line regardless of misguided messaging and low morale.

Where Do We Go From Here?

If you've been around LVUSD for a while, you should know that our employee base is resilient and energetic. We have made a long-term commitment to our students and community and will weather this storm. As mentioned at the beginning of this newsletter, YOU make a huge difference in the lives of your students. While you continue your great efforts with students, your Negotiating Team will make plans to bridge this gap between 2% and 15.86% starting next spring and summer. Keep your spirits high and stay focused on helping your students succeed at their highest level!

Reminder: August Paychecks Are Not Reflective of Future Ones

As mentioned in an email on Sept 1, don't get too excited about your August paycheck. It included your base pay (yearly salary divided by 11 months) less payroll taxes. Your paycheck will be quite different at the end of September. It could be a bit higher since any extra stipends and cash-back allowances were not added into your August check; however, employee deductions like health premium contributions, tax shelter annuity contributions, credit union savings programs, association dues, etc. were not deducted.

How about the YouTube videos and Podcasts from Ryan & Steve?

Have you seen the Weekend Updates and Podcasts that have come out from our Directors Ryan Gleason and Steve Scifres? Viewing invitations come out every Friday and you are encouraged to check them out. Are they effective?

We won't know until more of you take the survey. To complete this survey, please go to:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeYQCHAVIJimXhKVWAm8papW5ja_y_3W_INQO2Z5IP9SGBBtw/viewform

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