



Cotati Rohnert Park
Unified School District

Learning for a Lifetime

February 9, 2022

To All Families and Members of the Cotati-Rohnert Park Community,

Recently, many in our community received a message from the California Teachers Association (CTA) regarding negotiations with our local teachers union, RPCEA. While you may not always pay particularly close attention to district operations, given CTA's mention about a possible strike in our district, we wanted to share with you a few important facts.

Union Wants to Wait For Outside Opinion Before Moving Forward, We Agree -- We communicated with leaders of the RPCEA negotiating team last week, and they indicated that they wanted to wait for our budget and compensation proposals to be reviewed by a state-appointed "neutral", who will offer their opinion on a reasonable increase. The report is due to us the week of February 14th.

In the meantime, while it is our employees' privilege to share their voices through signs and demonstrations, we do hope that they will keep these discussions away from the classroom, as interrupting student learning and peace of mind while at school is an unnecessary disruption to our students.

A Strike is Not Necessary for Our Teachers to Be Heard -- First and foremost, we do not want a strike and are doing everything we can to make sure that it does not happen. We want our schools to remain open for our students – they deserve the stability of in-person education and we feel strongly they should not be burdened by the labor disagreement that we are working hard to resolve. We think a strike where teachers and others are not in school with students is not only inappropriate, but creates greater health and safety risks for our children and all of our staff.

We Agree Our Teachers Should Be Paid More -- Second, we are working hard to bridge the gap that existed between the District and the leadership in RPCEA. Our proposal is for 9.9% over three years, including a minimum guarantee of 7% ongoing for our teachers (and possibly more depending on future State funding). This agreement will require us to reorder priorities and engage in even more belt tightening in our District, but we believe this is worth it because we value and prioritize our teachers. We recognize they should be paid more, and we are seeking to do so within the fiscal realities of our budget.

Offering A Raise Without Cutting Programs/People -- Third, we respect the role of CTA as a statewide organization advocating for wages and working conditions for teachers. Collectively, however, we in the Cotati-Rohnert Park community are responsible for ensuring that our all of our educators and employees are valued, that our compensation is fair and reasonable for all of our employees, and that our District budget is sustainable in the short-, mid- and long-term so we can provide and protect programs and services that support our children in our schools. Simply put, we want to make sure that you know that our District is negotiating with a goal of offering all that we can to our employees without shifting so much money to salaries that we have to cut programs to cover this increase.

We offer facts for your consideration, and more information can be found on our website at https://crpusd.org/negotiations_updates.

Finally, on behalf of all of us at the District, we want to thank you for your support of our District and our shared commitment to the students we serve.

Respectfully,

Joe Cimino
Board President

Mayra Perez, Ed.D
Superintendent



Our District's Offer is 9.9% over three years

This offer includes a **\$2,000** bonus this year plus a guaranteed minimum of **7%** ongoing, and maybe more over the three years, depending on future state revenue. This will cost the District more than **\$5,000,000** and will require re-prioritizing expenditures and belt tightening, but we are committed to compensating our teachers in a fiscally responsible way.

Under our proposal, the average teacher salary would be **\$73,145**, effective July 1, 2022 and increase to **\$75,988**, effective July 1, 2023. This makes our average teacher compensation, including salary and benefits, very competitive in the county and our health benefit package remains one of the very best in the entire County of Sonoma.

Union asking for a 19% increase over three years

Unfortunately, the **19% increase** (or **\$12,000,000**) the union is seeking would require us to cut positions — people would lose jobs. Our people — including RPCEA members — are at the heart of the programs we deliver to our children. We cannot afford the risk of cutting people and key programs that support our students.

This increase we have offered will not require us to cut jobs or programs — though we will have to reprioritize expenditures. And we are committed to working to make our teachers salaries more competitive in the years to come in a fiscally responsible manner that supports our educators and the programs for our students.

The Union focus on salary does not consider the cost and value of our employees' health benefit package

Our district offers one of the best — if not the best — health benefit package in the county. Our employees receive up to **\$22,068**, while in other districts these benefit costs come from the employees' paychecks.

We know that substantial and reliable benefits packages help us with recruiting and retention. Ultimately, the cost for benefits cannot be ignored as this cost comes from the bottom line, much like it does in your household.

"Prioritize our people" is a value we share

Employees are the top priority; over **78%** of our district budget covers employee salaries and benefits.

Some have criticized newly-created district office positions. These positions are temporary and funded with one-time COVID-relief dollars, which will end.

Funding an ongoing salary increase with one-time money is not fiscally responsible and would be like basing a mortgage payment on a single bonus check — it's not prudent or sustainable.