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# **News Release**

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**For Release**  
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## **New SCUSD surveys yield advice from parents, teachers, students as more budget cuts loom**

### ***Superintendent wants more engagement with community***

*Feb. 18, 2010* – New surveys of Sacramento teachers, parents and students have generated valuable advice for school district officials as they work to cut up to \$30 million more from the budget and prepare a strategic plan, but Superintendent Jonathan Raymond said Thursday more community engagement is needed.

School teachers, administrators and parents surveyed agreed that keeping class sizes small is a top priority. But the Sacramento City Unified School District superintendent said at a news conference Thursday that raising class sizes must remain an option of last resort if employee unions do not agree to cuts elsewhere to make up the budget deficit.

“The survey clearly shows that parents and teachers don’t want larger class sizes, and neither do I,” Raymond said. “But increasing the number of students in class will remain an option if the employee organizations do not work with us to find other areas to reduce the budget.”

Parents and teachers surveyed also agreed that having good, up-to-date textbooks is a top budget priority.

“We received very valuable advice from the public and our employees with these surveys, but much more work needs to be done to engage the community,” said Raymond, who has made more community involvement in schools a top priority. “With these surveys, we heard most often from community members who attend school board meetings or are involved in schools in some other way. We need to do much more to reach out to and involve the thousands of parents and community members who are not normally engaged in what happens in our city’s schools. We will not reach our very high academic goals for our children unless we get broad involvement in public education by the entire community.”

The historic, first-of-its-kind effort to involve Sacramento residents in the improvement of their public schools began Jan. 19 when the public and district employees were invited to respond to the online surveys regarding the school district budget and development of a strategic plan. The surveys closed on February 9. Complete results from the surveys are expected soon.

An initial report reveals that 12,855 responses were made to the surveys, including 4,609 students who responded to the survey regarding the strategic plan, and 2,087 teachers and other staff and 2,336 community members who responded to the budget and strategic plan surveys.

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Among community members who responded to the survey regarding development of a strategic plan, 45 percent had attended at least one school board meeting in the past year, and 49 percent had attended PTA meetings. Those numbers showed, Raymond said, that many of the community members responding to the surveys are already somewhat or very involved in schools.

“The advice we received from everyone is tremendously valuable,” Raymond said. “We must find a way, however, to strengthen our engagement with the community and encourage more people who are not involved in our schools now to speak up and be heard from.”

Raymond said the surveys will help him realize his top priorities for the school district –making sure every school has a strong principal and quality teachers in every classroom, and that the district fully engages parents and the community.

As state revenues have fallen, SCUSD has cut more than \$144 million from its budget over the past seven years. Raymond said up to \$30 million more in cuts are needed to balance the 2010-11 budget.

### **Ranking of top budget priorities of community, employees**

**Survey results, SCUSD (January 19-February 9, 2010)**

	<b>Community Rank</b>	<b>Employee Rank</b>
<b>Small class sizes</b>	<b>#1</b>	<b>#1</b>
<b>Textbooks</b>	<b>#2</b>	<b>#3</b>
<b>Gifted &amp; Talented Ed.</b>	<b>#3</b>	<b>#17</b>
<b>Clean schools</b>	<b>#4</b>	<b>#4</b>
<b>One principal per school</b>	<b>#5</b>	<b>#2</b>
<b>Art and Music Ed</b>	<b>#6</b>	<b>#7</b>
<b>Central office support</b>	<b>#7</b>	<b>#11</b>
<b>Adult education programs</b>	<b>#8</b>	<b>#19</b>

Asked what moves by the school district they would support to help solve the budget crisis, community members and teachers and staff agreed that closing under enrolled schools is a top option. The budget survey showed 75 percent of teachers and staff and 67 percent of parents and community members would support closing under enrolled schools. In addition, 53 percent of community members favored closing low performing schools as a way of balancing the budget. The same majority, 53 percent, of SCUSD administrative staff favored closing low performing schools to help deal with the budget crisis, while only 25 percent of teachers favored such a move.

Raymond said he understands and appreciates the suggestion to look at under-performing and under-enrolled schools so the district can operate more effectively and efficiently. “Given the large number of things that school consolidation touches, I will take the public’s suggestion and work so we can do it in the most effective way possible.

We will seek further input from the public and develop a full process for school closings as we consider it for the following year 2011-2012. I believe we need to invest the time to get this right.”

## Ways to help close the budget deficit

*(Percentage who support action)*

	Community	Teachers	Admin. Staff
<b>Close under enrolled schools</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>88%</b>
<b>Close low performing schools</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>53%</b>
<b>Furlough days for employees</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>71%</b>

Superintendent Raymond said he wants to make a special effort to keep budget cuts away from arts and music programs this year because those programs have been hit so hard in the past. The strategic plan survey showed the community members believe effectiveness of SCUSD’s fine arts programs is one of its biggest weaknesses, with 89 percent of community members rating fine arts in schools as important but only 36 percent saying the school district does an effective job with arts education.

The strategic plan survey showed Raymond is right to be concerned about the district’s historic lack of parent engagement. The survey showed that 93 percent of community members rated parent engagement as important but that only 57 percent believe the district actually does an effective job in parent engagement.

The superintendent’s goal of having an effective teacher in every classroom also is supported by the strategic plan survey. The survey showed that 97 percent of community members rated having effective teachers as critical to success, but only 64 percent said SCUSD is doing a good job of providing effective teachers, a gap of 33 percentage points.

“We have learned a lot from these surveys. We learned we need to listen to what our students have to say, and that in many respects teachers and parents are on the same page when it comes to what’s best for children. But we also learned we need to try harder to reach and involve our whole community in improving schools, and that the community indeed wants an effective teacher in every classroom” Raymond said. “We have a big job ahead of us, but we’re working hard to get it done.”

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