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For Immediate Release

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SCUSD Considers Eliminating Support for Athletics, Laying Off Teachers, at Tonight's Meeting

March 3, 2011 (Sacramento) – At tonight's Board of Education meeting, trustees will consider drastic measures to balance a projected "worst case" deficit of \$22.35 million – including cutting financial support for sports, drama, yearbook, newspaper, marching band, cheerleading and speech and debate.

The proposal is to eliminate "extra pay for extra duty stipends," uniform replacements funds, athletic trainer funds and co-curricular transportation funds for a savings of \$1.261 million.

Trustees will also consider reducing the district's counseling staff by 37 percent, eliminating one assistant principal position at each high school and raising K-3 class sizes at two grade levels. The Board previously approved raising class sizes for all other grades – including 40 students per teacher at the high school level.

Raising class sizes, which must be negotiated with collective bargaining partners, reduces the need for teachers. Also on tonight's agenda, the Board will consider approving layoff notices to certificated staff, which includes teachers, counselors and other positions.

The district is racing to meet a March 15 deadline to present a balanced budget to the Sacramento County Office of Education or risk receiving a "negative" rating, which could lead to state takeover. This year's budgeting process is especially challenging as the state's funding of K-12 district hinges on voters extending current temporary taxes in a June 7 special election.

So far, the legislature has not placed tax extensions on the ballot. Governor Brown is asking for a two-thirds vote in the Senate and Assembly for such a measure and has given legislators a March 10 deadline. If the taxes are not extended, SCUSD will face a \$22.35 million shortfall.

"These proposed cuts are terrible," said Superintendent Jonathan Raymond. "There isn't an expendable position in our district. We have no surplus staff. We have no programs that are simply 'icing on the cake.' Sports, drama, yearbook – these are programs and students need and deserve. Often, these so-called 'extras' are the only reason kids come to school."

SCUSD's worst-case shortfall is on top of \$177 million in cuts to SCUSD's budget in the last nine years – a 35 percent reduction in what was once a \$500 million budget. Even if voters pass tax extensions in a special election, it is projected that more cuts will be needed to balance SCUSD's budget for next year, due to the lingering recession and enrollment declines in some areas.

To raise awareness of budget issues, the district has been holding a series of community forums. The district also has asked its community to participate in a Budget Priorities Survey, which is available at www.scusd.edu.

“We need the public to understand that years of the state balancing its budget on the backs of kids has eliminated all the easy solutions to public education under-funding,” said Raymond. “As a colleague of mine recently said, not only is all the ‘low-hanging fruit’ gone, the tree is gone.”

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