

September 23, 2008

Jack Lowe, President
Board of Trustees
Dallas Independent School District
3700 Ross Ave.
Dallas, TX 75204

Dear President Lowe:

I represent several teachers employed by the Dallas Independent School District who are members of the Texas Classroom Teachers Association, as well as other TCTA members potentially affected by the current serious financial situation facing the DISD.

First, I would like to begin by both thanking, as well as commending, the Board for their most recent approach to this problem. While formally recognizing the seriousness and scope of this matter, the Board wisely chose not to take any immediate action concerning a reduction in force of personnel. The Board obviously recognizes that such an undertaking requires further informed review before proceeding, including the consideration of all other available options. Since a reduction in personnel will not only affect current efforts to improve student performance, but will also be likely to undo or at least slow recent gains, as well as have an immeasurable effect on teacher morale, such action must indeed truly be a last resort.

One potential funding source that should be considered to help reduce the need to subject personnel to a reduction in force is the District's Performance Pay Plan(s). Not only could converting performance pay funds free up much needed funding for teacher salaries, but this approach would also provide other tangible and intangible benefits for the district. The district has approximately \$15 million dollars in state incentive funds; \$10 million-plus through the District Award for Teacher Excellence (DATE) grant, and an additional \$4.6 million from Texas Educator Excellence Grant (TEEG). At the very least, we suggest that the district request a waiver from TEA to use these funds to pay for the salaries of instructional personnel who would otherwise be subject to a reduction in force. In the event such a waiver request is denied, we recommend that the district explore the possibility of restructuring the performance pay plans to be used for teacher retention in the form of salaries to minimize the need for reductions in force of instructional personnel.

Our organization recognizes the gravity and difficulty of the task before you, and appreciates your willingness to proceed deliberately and consider creative approaches.

Yours truly,

Gerald G. Francisco
Attorney at Law

cc: Dr. Michael Hinojosa, Superintendent of Schools