

IN FACT FINDING PROCEEDINGS PURSUANT TO THE EDUCATIONAL
EMPLOYEMENT RELATIONS ACT

SACRAMENTO CITY UNIFIED SCHOOL
DISTRICT,

Employer,

vs.

SACRAMENTO CITY TEACHERS
ASSOCIATION,

Union

PERB Case No. SA-IM-3546-E

REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS
OF FACT FINDING PANEL

Joe Lindsay, Neutral Chair
John Gray, Employer Representative
John Borsos, Union Representative

APPEARANCES:

For the Employer: Dulcinea Grantham, Lozano Smith
Christine Baeta, Sacramento City Unified School District

For the Union: David Fisher, Sacramento City Teachers Association
Nikki Milevsky, Sacramento City Teachers Association

INTRODUCTION:

The Sacramento City Unified School District (District or Employer) and the Sacramento City Teachers Association (SCTA or Union) are parties to a Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA or contract). The most recent CBA expired June 30, 2019, and the parties have been bargaining for a successor agreement since earlier in 2019. While that bargaining was in process, the Covid pandemic hit the US in early 2020, and various shutdown orders, mask mandates, etc., were put into place throughout California in mid-March, 2020. As a result, the two parties to this dispute began negotiations over Covid-related issues. Impasse was certified in December, 2021, on the Covid-related bargaining. Impasse has not yet been reached in the

successor contract bargaining. Thus this fact finding process covers those issue related to the Covid pandemic, and does not include other issues related only to successor bargaining.

Due to the ongoing pandemic, all proceedings in this Fact Finding process have occurred via Zoom video, or telephone calls. The Chair met with all parties together on two occasions prior to the formal hearing, with each of the parties separately on three additional dates, and with the Panel several times, both before and after the hearing. The fact-finding hearing was held on March 7, 2022 (via Zoom), and each party had the opportunity to present their full case, including documentary evidence, additional testimony, and argument, in support of their respective positions on the issues. Following the hearing, the parties attempted mediation but no agreement was reached. Four days after the hearing, on March 11, 2022, the District submitted a substantial packet of “Supplemental Information for Fact-Finding.” The Union responded to that by email on March 12.

SCOPE OF FACT FINDING

This case has been complicated by a dispute between the parties as to what the scope of the fact finding should be. The District’s position is that only those issues which are directly and specifically involved with aspects of the pandemic, such as Health and Safety, and Continuity of Learning, to name two, are properly included herein. The Union’s position is that short staffing is inseparable from, and is a contributing factor to some of the Covid-related problems facing the parties, and that issues related to short staffing, including wages and proposed take-aways, are thus properly before the panel.

The District declared impasse in a letter from District Superintendent Jorge Aguilar to Union President David Fisher on December 10, 2021. In that letter, the District laid out a number of proposals, “including Continuity of Instructional Programs, Extra Pay for Substitutes, Extra Pay for Nurses, Independent Study, Health and Safety (Reopening), Training Specialists and implementation of the District’s vaccination resolution.” The District then went on to explain, at least partially, some of the details of the disagreements between the parties, ending with this statement: “Finally, the parties have not been able to come to agreement on how to address serious staffing shortages, including utilizing District Training Specialists to fill in for high need vacant positions, providing extra pay for substitute teachers, and extra pay for District nurses to conduct COVID-19 contact tracing and other COVID-related duties after regular work hours. Negotiations have resulted in little progress regarding these points” [emphases added].

The same day the District filed a Request for Impasse Declaration with PERB, laying out their justification for the Request. In their Addendum to the Request (6 unnumbered pages), the District laid out details of proposals and bargaining to date. In the paragraph beginning “On October 26, 2021” (third page of the Addendum), the District laid out a proposal “to provide independent study to students not yet assigned a teacher at Cap City Independent Study due to staffing shortages” [emphasis added]. In the paragraph beginning “On November 30, 2021” (top of fourth page), the District laid out a series of positions taken in bargaining that day by the Union, including: “SCTA also submitted a counter proposal on substitutes and combined class and a new proposal to address the staffing crisis in the District, ...” [emphasis added].

Additionally, in the bullet point regarding the open issue of Training Specialists (fifth page), the District reported that they have “proposed temporarily assigning training specialists to fill vacant teaching positions” [emphasis added]. Thus in their PERB filing, the District acknowledged the

existence of staffing shortages, and that both parties had submitted proposals related to those shortages.

The Union responded to the District’s Request for Impasse in a letter to PERB from John Borsos, the SCTA Executive Director, on December 16, 2021, disputing the District’s framing of the issues in dispute, while agreeing that the successor contract negotiations are not part of the impasse request (and thus not covered by this Fact Finding). The Union went on to restate the issues from their point of view, beginning with “Broadly described, the matters in dispute are as follows: 1. The certificated staffing crisis in SCUSD, . . .”

Based on the preceding, it is clear and has been agreed by both parties that this Fact Finding is limited in nature and does not include successor bargaining, which is not at impasse. However, the Chair finds that this Fact Finding does properly include the issue of short staffing as it affects the ability of the District to deal with the pandemic, and the parties’ various proposals related to that issue.

REQUIREMENTS OF LAW

This Fact Finding is governed by the provisions of EERA, which provide in relevant part in Section 3548.2(b) that

- the factfinders shall consider, weigh and be guided by all the following criteria:
- (1) State and federal laws that are applicable to the employer.
 - (2) Stipulations of the parties.
 - (3) The interests and welfare of the public and the financial ability of the public school employer.
 - (4) Comparison of the wages, hours and conditions of employment of the employees involved in the factfinding proceeding with the wages, hours, and conditions of employment of other employees performing similar services and with other employees generally in public school employment in comparable communities.
 - (5) The consumer price index for goods and services, commonly known as the cost of living.

- (6) The overall compensation presently received by the employees, including direct wage compensation, vacations, holidays, and other excused time, insurance and pensions, medical and hospitalization benefits; the continuity and stability of employment; and all other benefits received.
- (7) Any other facts, not confined to specified in paragraphs (1) to (6), inclusive, which are normally or traditionally taken into consideration in making the findings and recommendations.

THE ISSUES AS PRESENTED BY THE PARTIES

THE DISTRICT

At the hearing, the District laid out the issues as follows, with all of their proposals to expire June 30, 2022:

- Continuity of Instruction (10/26/21 updated proposal)
 - Concurrent instruction—providing simultaneous instruction to students in class, and to students on Zoom due to quarantine.
 - Having a quarantined teacher provide instruction remotely via Zoom, while students in the classroom are supervised by a substitute.
 - Compensate teachers for additional time needed to prepare for Zoom instruction.
- Increase to Substitute Pay and Prep Coverage Pay
 - Increase pay for short-term and long-term substitutes by 25%, retroactive to first day of school.
 - Increase pay for secondary teachers who volunteer to substitute on their prep period by 25% over the current contractual rate, retroactive to first day of school.
- Extra Pay for Extra Work by Nurses¹ (9/16/21 proposal)

¹ The District asserts that despite agreement on this proposal, it hasn't been implemented because it is part of a package.

- Pay nurses \$150/hour for COVID-related extra work including direct services to students, retroactive to first day of school.
- Hours will be approved and not unreasonably denied.
- Long Term Independent Study – Working with Students for Extra Pay (10/26 updated proposal)
 - Up to 8 hours per week additional compensation for teachers who volunteer to work with Independent Study students, due to staffing shortage.
 - More rigorous instruction than required by AB130, per District’s 10/26/21 proposal.
 - Professional Development prior to start of school year.
 - Right to return to prior or comparable position for teachers who are assigned to Independent Study for 2021-2022.
 - Teachers who volunteer to be assigned no more than 10 students, and will receive their per diem.
 - Volunteers will be selected by seniority, with numbers determined based on District need.
- Health and Safety for Reopening Schools
 - General safety protections, including CDPH and SCDPH guidance for schools, and the District’s Return to Health Plan.
 - Regular meetings between the parties on health and safety issues.
 - Access to vaccination for employees.
 - Compliance with order on vaccination or test requirement for employees.
 - Testing protocol for employees without proof of vaccination.
 - Health screening for Covid symptoms.

- Protocol for monitoring symptoms and positive Covid cases.
- Compliance with CalOSHA notice requirements.
- Training Specialists (10/26/21 proposal)
 - Temporarily reassign 28 training specialists to fill vacancies in high-needs positions.

In addition, in their March 11 submission of Supplemental Information, the District restated its position that current impasse does not, and cannot, include the general notion of a staffing crisis.

THE UNION

In their presentation at the hearing, the Union stated the issues as follows:

- An overall solution to recruiting and retaining staff.
 - District to drop takeaways and extend the existing contract through June 30, 2023.
(1/26/22 Contract Extension proposal)
 - Provide cost of living increases consistent with those in the Superintendent's contract.
 - No layoffs for 2022-2023.
 - Creation of a Recruitment and Retention Committee
- Providing a safe and healthy work environment during the pandemic. (1/27/22 Health & Safety proposal; School Nurse proposal)
 - Extend Covid sick leave days by up to 10 additional days retroactive to 10/1/21.
 - If there are changes to CDPH guidelines that conflict with already agreed-upon Health and Safety items, the higher standard will prevail.
 - Create a SCTA/District Health and Safety committee.
 - Finalize date for implementation of vaccination mandate.

- Add indemnity clause for violations of Health and Safety agreement.
- Other issues addressed in 1/27/22 SCTA Health and Safety proposal.
- SCTA Proposal on School Nurses – accept the District’s last proposal.
- Addressing the shortage of substitutes and additional work (11/20/21 Proposal on Subs and Extra Work)
 - Accept District proposal for increased rates for substitutes.
 - Adjust overall salary schedule so that Column A, Step 1 is equal to the Step 2 rates for substitutes.
 - Provide 25% over employee’s regular hourly rate for regular staff who volunteer to substitute during a free or prep period.
 - Provide additional 25% rate for special education teachers who volunteer to accept additional students,
 - Provide Covid sick leave for substitutes.
 - Create 50 benefitted substitute positions to support high needs schools.
 - Other issues contained in 11/20 SCTA proposal.
- Addressing staffing for Independent Study (Incorporated in 1/27/22 SCTA H&S proposal)
 - Students with disabilities get same models as general education students.
 - Consistent with AB130.
 - Expectation of return to in-person instruction.
 - Staff compensated for extra time at contractual hourly rate.
 - Right to return to home school for staff who accept Independent Study assignment.
 - Maintenance of staff at home school.

- Professional development.
- 8 extra hours for maximum of 10 students, including 3 prep hours, per Superintendent’s statement at board meeting. Assignment by seniority.
- Additional items incorporated in 1/27/22 SCTA H&S proposal.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS²

1. Health and Safety

The parties appear to be of like mind on many of the issues in the Health and Safety area.

The Chair finds that there is disagreement in the following:

- The District has proposed that the parties meet regularly on health and safety issues.

The Union has proposed the creation of an SCTA/SCUSD Health and Safety

Committee. These proposals are not in conflict. The Chair finds that the

establishment of a standing committee, especially on a subject such as this, can act to

ensure that issues are addressed on a timely basis. *The Chair recommends that a*

District/Union Health and Safety Committee be established. This recommendation

extends beyond 6/30/2022.

- The District proposes that for general safety protections, the parties be bound by the guidelines of CDPH and SCPDH. The Union proposes that where the parties have previously agreed to a higher standard, that the higher standard continue to apply.

Particularly, state guidelines on distancing, while initially requiring 6 feet, have been

adjusted to 3 feet. *The Chair recommends that the parties adopt the current CDPH*

² Recommendations are those of the Chair, and will be shown in *italics*. Unless otherwise noted, all recommendations are for the term through June 30, 2022, unless the parties mutually agree to extend any or all of them.

- guideline, i.e., 3 feet distancing.*³ *Any questions that arise as the result of such updates may be raised for discussion at the Health and Safety Committee, or as otherwise determined by the parties.*
- Both parties have proposed compliance with the vaccination-or-testing mandates, but no compliance date has been set. *The Chair recommends that April 30, 2022 be set as the final date for such compliance, with such date being subject to modification by mutual agreement of the parties. This provision should extend beyond 6/30/2022.*
 - The Union has proposed that the District provide Covid Sick Leave retroactively for the period 10/1/21-12/31/21, while SB 95 was inoperative. The Chair finds this to be a reasonable allocation of Covid funds. *The Chair recommends that the Union's proposal be adopted.*
 - The Union has proposed that an indemnity clause be implemented, requiring the District to compensate the Union \$250,00 for each violation of the Health and Safety Agreement. *The Chair does not recommend that this proposal be adopted.*
 - *To the extent that other Health & Safety issues remain, or subsequently arise, the Chair recommends that the parties work through the Health and Safety Committee, or as otherwise agreed by the parties, to resolve such issues.*
2. Continuity of Instruction/Short-Term Independent Study
- The District has proposed a plan to require teachers to connect with quarantined students via Zoom while simultaneously providing in-person instruction in the regular classroom. *The Chair does not recommend adoption of the District's proposal.*

³ The Chair is aware that there is a pending PERB trial related to this issue. The findings and recommendations here are without prejudice to the positions of either the Union or the District, and certainly not of PERB, in that proceeding.

- The District has proposed that quarantined teachers provide instruction remotely via Zoom to students in the classroom, while those students are supervised by a substitute, and that such teachers be compensated for additional time needed to prepare for such Zoom instruction. *The Chair recommends that the District's proposal be adopted, including a provision that any quarantined teacher may freely choose to volunteer for, or decline, such assignment.*

3. Long-Term Independent Study

- The District's proposal regarding long-term independent study includes a chart laying out minimum daily and weekly required times for instruction which are in excess of those required by AB130, described by the District as "more rigorous" or "more robust." While more direct instruction time may be a laudable goal, it is not required by the law. The record shows that currently there are nearly 600 students on the wait list for independent study, and at least 14 teaching vacancies for that program. Getting those students placed with a teacher, and filling the vacancies, should be the priority at this time. *The Chair recommends that the parties comply with AB130 and that the chart which exceeds the AB130 requirements (item 3 in the District's 10/26/21 proposal) should be considered a goal of the parties. The parties, of course, may exceed the requirements of AB130 if they mutually agree to do so at any time..*
- The District has proposed that teachers with regular classroom assignments can volunteer to work with Independent Study students, due to the staffing shortage. Teachers who volunteer would be assigned up to 10 IS students, and would receive their per diem compensation for up to 8 hours per week. Volunteers would be

selected by seniority, with the numbers based on District need. The Union has concurred with much of that proposal, with the addition that the 8 hours per week would include 5 hours of direct instruction, and 3 hours of prep time. In support of their modified proposal on this issue (see SCTA 1/26/22 proposal on “Safely Reopening Schools . . .,” Section XI. C. a. vii on page 12) the Union cited the statement of the SCUSD Superintendent at the 11/18/21 School Board meeting.⁴ *The Chair recommends that the Union proposal be adopted.*

- The District has proposed that teachers who are assigned to Independent Study would have the right to return to their prior or comparable position, while the Union has proposed that staff who accept such assignment would have the right to return to their home school. *The Chair recommends that teachers assigned to Independent Study shall have the right to return to their prior assignment, with the understanding that this provision does not confer “super-seniority” for any teacher who would have otherwise been subject to layoff or reassignment from the home school.*
- The parties appear to agree on the issue of providing Professional Development prior to the start of the school. *The Chair recommends that such provision be adopted.*
- *To the extent that additional issues remain regarding Long-Term Independent Study, the Chair recommends that the parties work together to finalize those.*

⁴ Statement of Superintendent Aguilar: “I don’t have unfortunately an update for you or our community. We are still trying to reach agreement with our labor partner SCTA. Specifically the proposal that would have volunteer teachers teach students in independent study up to 10 students, 8 hours a week, with 5 of those hours being 1 hour of synchronous instruction per day and the other three hours for prep time. That of course you can imagine would probably alleviate and depressurize the system quite a bit.” https://sacteachers.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/BOE-11.18.2021_JA_Trim.mp4

4. Training Specialists

- The District has proposed to temporarily assign Training Specialists to fill vacant teaching positions in the District. In support of this proposal, the District cites the current staffing shortage, and the fact that the San Juan School District has adopted such a provision. There is no dispute that San Juan is a “comparable” school district, being of similar size, and its location just to the east of SCUSD. The District included in its presentation at the hearing a copy of the agreement reached between SJUSD and the San Juan Teachers Association. Key points of that agreement include:

- Reliance on regular substitutes first, and then non-represented staff second, before using Emergency Backup Practitioners [comparable to the Training Specialists at issue here].
- Staff will not be assigned as EBP more than one full day per week as they have essential work to provide; if lack of supervision requires assignment more than once a week, a key administrator [insert name here] and the union will be notified.
- Participation is optional (voluntary).
- Any staff who agree to act as EBP will be compensated \$15 per 15 minute increment, up to a maximum of \$345 per day, in addition to their regular pay.

The Chair recommends that the parties adopt the District’s proposal, amended to include the four bullet points from the San Joan agreement, listed above.

5. Substitutes and Extra Coverage

- The District has proposed that daily rates for substitutes be increased by 25%, and that the rate for secondary school teachers who volunteer to substitute on their prep period be increased by 25% over the current rates; that these rates be retroactive to the beginning of the 2021-22 school year, with the provision to expire June 30, 2022. *The Chair recommends that the District's proposal be adopted.*
- The Union has proposed that the above proposed rates for teachers who volunteer to substitute on their prep period also apply to teachers who agree to substitute on a free period, and to those who voluntarily accept an assignment to teach an extra period or voluntarily accept an out-of-regular assignment; and that any elementary school teacher who is not provided a prep period shall receive an alternative prep period with 5 working days, or shall be paid for the missed prep period at 25% above the teacher's regular rate of pay. This proposal is comparable to other proposals relating to extra work. *The Chair recommends that the Union's proposal be accepted.*
- The Union has proposed that Special Education teachers who voluntarily accept additional students on their caseload should receive an additional 25% above the contractual rate (see Section 17.6.1(k) of the CBA). This proposal is comparable to other proposals relating to extra work. *The Chair recommends that the Union's proposal be adopted.*
- The Union has proposed that no teacher be required to teach a combined class, and that those who volunteer to teach a combined class would be paid \$100 per hour for the time worked. This proposal is somewhat comparable to others relating to extra work. *The Chair recommends that the Union proposal be adopted, but modified to*

provide that teachers who voluntarily agree to teach combined classes be compensated for such hours at 25% above their regular salary.

- The Union has proposed that the regular salary schedule be adjusted so that the starting salary (Column A, Step 1) is equal to the Step 2 rates for substitutes, as amended above, in order to provide equity within the bargaining unit. *The Chair does not recommend that this proposal be adopted.*
- The Union proposed that substitutes be entitled to an additional 14 days of paid sick leave for use if they contract Covid or are required to quarantine. This seems an appropriate use of Covid funds and may help alleviate the shortage of substitutes. *The Chair recommends that the Union proposal be adopted.*
- The Union proposed that the District create 50 benefitted substitute positions to support schools that struggle to find substitutes. *The Chair finds that this proposal is beyond the scope of this fact-finding, and should be dealt with in successor bargaining.*

6. Extra Pay for Nurses

- During Mediation on February 2, 2022, the parties reached agreement on an MOU providing extra pay for school nurses working extra hours, retroactive to the first day of the 2021-22 school year. The Union signed that MOU on February 3, but the District declined to sign it at that time, characterizing it as part of a package. *Whether or not it was part of a package at that time, the Chair recommends that the proposal be adopted.*

7. Staffing Shortage – as discussed above, the parties are in dispute as to whether issues related to the agreed-upon staffing shortage are within the scope of this fact finding.

Nevertheless, the Chair finds that this Fact Finding does properly include the issue of short staffing as it affects the ability of the District to deal with the pandemic, and the parties' various proposals related to that issue. And the issues of wages and benefits are clearly relevant to recruitment and retention of staff.⁵

- The District's proposals around Health Benefits and Retiree Health contributions, which have been characterized by the Union as takeaways, are prospective, and thus can continue to be negotiated in successor bargaining. *The Chair finds that these proposals are beyond the scope of this fact-finding, and should be dealt with in successor bargaining.*
- Regarding wages, there have been no increases since when the last scheduled increase occurred during the predecessor contract, presumably during the 2018-19 school year. The District has already made proposals to increase pay to substitutes, to nurses, and to teachers who volunteer for certain assignments, thus recognizing that wages are an important factor in dealing with staffing shortages. *The Chair finds that wages are within the scope of this fact finding.*
- The Union proposed to extend the existing contract through June 30, 2023, with no takeaways, and both parties having the right to renew their various positions on the issues. *The Chair finds that this proposal is beyond the scope of this fact-finding, and should be dealt with in successor bargaining.*

⁵ It is counter-intuitive to expect that proposals to shift healthcare costs to employees, or to freeze wages for several years, would help any employer recruit and retain staff. The only information at the hearing regarding the healthcare issue was provided by the teachers' representative from neighboring Natomas School District, when she described the difficulty her district has had maintaining staff since they instituted requirements for employees to pay high premium costs for healthcare benefits.

- The Union proposed to provide cost-of-living increases consistent with those in the Superintendent’s employment contract, which provides that the Superintendent will receive the same increases as provided to the SCTU bargaining unit, and that if there is no agreement on salary for a given year, the Superintendent would receive an increase based on the California CPI.⁶ *The Chair recommends that the District provide an across-the-board salary increase retroactive to the beginning the 2021-22 school year, in an amount equal to the cost-of-living increase provided to the Superintendent for this school year. Such salary increase would not expire 6/30/2022. The Chair also finds that the issues of any wage increases for the 2019-20 and the 2020-21 school years, and for 2022-23 or subsequent years, including any effective dates and/or retroactivity, are beyond the scope of this fact finding, and should be dealt with in successor bargaining.*
- The Union has proposed no layoffs for 2022-23. As the SCUSD Board has recently decided that there will not be layoffs for 2022-23, the Union’s proposal is moot.

⁶ Paragraph 2b2 of the Superintendent’s Employment Agreement reads in full:

2. Increases to Total Salary Conditioned on Positive Evaluations. Following any “satisfactory or higher” evaluation after the effective date of this Agreement, the Superintendent’s salary shall be increased by the same percentage increase provided to any members of the certificated bargaining unit. This provision shall remain in effect through the end of the 2024-2025 school year. During this period of time, the Superintendent shall also receive the same one-time or off-schedule payments made to the certificated bargaining unit on the same terms and conditions provided to bargaining unit members. If the District and the certificated bargaining unit are unable to reach an agreement on salary for any given school year, then the Superintendent will receive a salary increase consistent with the California Consumer Price Index for that school year in lieu of any increases subsequently negotiated by the certificated bargaining unit for that school year. This provision shall remain in effect through the end of the 2024-2025 school year.

https://www.scusd.edu/sites/main/files/file-attachments/superintendent_agreement_final_dec_2021_00907983x7ad00.pdf

- The Union has proposed the creation of a Recruitment and Retention Committee. *The Chair recommends adoption of the Union proposal. This recommendation extends beyond 6/30/2022.*

CONCLUSION

The Chair hopes that these recommendations will serve as the basis for the parties to complete negotiations in the current impasse.

Respectfully submitted March 17, 2022,

(signed)_____

Joe Lindsay, Chair of Fact Finding Panel

Panel Members:

John Gray, District, Partial concurrence/dissent attached

John Borsos, Union, Concurrence attached