INGLEWOOD UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

401 S. Inglewood, Avenue, Inglewood, California 90301 phone: 310-419-2700

April 6, 2018

Dear Parents,

As we approach the end of my first school year as the State Administrator of the Inglewood Unified School District, I remain committed to being open and available to all of those who are a part of our school community. Your child's education and safety are our most important priorities. When I began in August, I learned that the District faced an **$8 million shortfall**. Over the past year we've made impressive strides in reducing the deficit by close to a million dollars and we must all continue to work together in addressing our budget shortfalls. The situation we are in is largely a result of declining student enrollment in our schools, combined with the District's past inability to make the difficult reductions that were, and continue to be, essential for Inglewood Unified to achieve a sustainable recovery.

Adding to our financial stress, Inglewood Unified's costs for utilities, maintenance, pensions, and employee health benefits have continued to rise. Five years ago, we paid close to $5 million for employee pensions. This year the cost is almost double, requiring Inglewood Unified to contribute nearly $9 million, an increase of $4 million dollars over five years. The cost increases we face are significant. However, accurate enrollment predictions combined with adequate planning could have helped the District prepare for our current fiscal challenges. This would have allowed the District to make budget reductions over several years instead of the immediate significant cuts we must now consider.

The result of rising costs and Inglewood Unified's inadequate planning, even after the cost savings measures implemented to date, as of March 15th is now a **$7 million budget shortfall.** This requires us to dramatically continue to reduce our costs. Some of the cost savings we've identified present exciting opportunities, such as merging Woodworth Elementary with next-door Monroe Middle School, but many cost reductions have involved difficult decisions. We are offering an early retirement incentive to teachers and support staff. We have also had to lay off a significant number of staff in certificated, classified, and management positions, while also leaving non-essential vacancies unfilled over the last year.

To reduce personnel costs, we asked our administrative personnel and management staff to accept an increase to their health care premiums. We are now asking our teachers and other union-represented employees to accept the same increase. We wouldn't be asking them to do this if we thought there was another way. We value our employees' commitment to our District and understand how essential it is that we continue to provide the best educators for our students.

Over the past year we have been working with two unions, the Inglewood Teachers Association (ITA), and California Professional Employees (CalPro), to negotiate contracts, including salary and benefits, for teachers and other represented employees. Currently, for an HMO plan, Inglewood teachers and represented staff pay a monthly premium between $0 and $147.59. Inglewood Unified School District pays the rest at a total cost to the District of $1,905.41 each month, per employee. To reduce these costs, we have proposed placing a cap on the maximum amount that the District would pay for employee benefits. We will continue to provide dental and vision insurance to all of our teachers and classified staff at no cost to employees.

STATE ADMINISTRATOR

Thelma Meléndez de Santa Ana, Ph.D.

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As the negotiation process moves forward, please be assured that we consider our staff the foundation and the force behind our educational programs, and our efforts to reward them well are hampered only by our financial realities. So far, in working with teachers and their union representatives we've been unable to reach an agreement that satisfies both sides. After working with a mediator and remaining unable to reach an agreement we're moving to the fact-finding stage of the process. For more information on this phase of our negotiations, please refer to our FAQ page and a short budget presentation found on our website at myIUSD.net.

In an effort to make their position more visible, the Inglewood Teachers Association has threatened to strike. As a result, Inglewood Unified is taking the necessary steps to ensure our educational programs will continue uninterrupted, and our ability to maintain a safe learning environment for our students will remain unchanged. We are committed to maintaining open communication with you, and will continue to provide updates as this process moves forward.

We are also committed to turning this cycle of cuts around as we continue our efforts to transform schools by prioritizing safety, ensuring continued quality instruction, and increasing our competitiveness relative to other educational entities.

Sincerely,

Thelma Melendez de Santa Ana, Ph.D.
State Administrator