INGLEWOOD UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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STATE ADMINISTRATOR

Thelma Meléndez
de Santa Ana, Ph.D.

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April 9, 2018

Dear Staff,

We are only a few months away from the end of my first school year as the State Administrator for the Inglewood Unified School District (IUSD). I want to address circumstances that are likely to be of significant concern to all of our staff members as we approach the conclusion of the 2017-2018 school year.

Inglewood Unified's costs have been rising across the board, from utilities, maintenance, and pensions, to employee health benefits. Meanwhile, our funding has been declining. In my November letter to staff entitled "Forecasts for Our Future," I mentioned an $8 million budget shortfall we identified in August. Since then, we have been able to realize nearly $1 million in savings through position/staff reductions and resource consolidation. We wish there were ways to remedy this deficit without impacting those who carry out our mission of educating students. After all, teachers did not create this financial mess. Our food service workers and other classified staff were not responsible for a multimillion-dollar shortfall. None of you are responsible for this situation. And yet, unfortunately, we must all be a part of the solution if we are to continue ensuring that our students achieve their full potential without incurring further debt for the District.

Fifteen years ago, there were 18,000 students enrolled in our schools. This year, there are just over 9,000 students. The amount of funding that we receive is tied directly to how many students attend our schools. This means that IUSD, like all other school districts, must predict how many students will enroll in future years in order to estimate how much money will be available.

Many other school districts in our region foresaw an impending crisis. These districts responded to trends throughout California and L.A. County, including declining birth rates and declining migration by reducing their spending over the course of several years to balance their budgets.

Unlike those districts, Inglewood Unified did not reduce spending in anticipation of these changes. IUSD's inability to predict and respond to rising costs and declining revenues resulted in this year's budget shortfall. Accurate enrollment predictions combined with adequate planning could have helped Inglewood Unified prepare for our current fiscal challenges by making budget reductions over several years. Instead, we must now consider immediate and significant cuts.

Inglewood Unified's financial situation has required us to ask for increases in contributions from our employees towards their health care plans, as a part of our ongoing labor negotiations. Our staff are now being asked to make contributions to their health care on par with those currently made by IUSD's administrative personnel and management staff.

Together, we can turn this cycle of cuts around. To accomplish this, IUSD will need to bolster the number of families who choose to keep their children enrolled in our schools. To prevent declining enrollment from plaguing our school system, we must continue our focus on ensuring the success of our students. Our ongoing transformation involves enhancing our educational programs, modernizing our facilities, and showcasing our dedicated staff. Thank you for continuing to support the students of Inglewood Unified.

Sincerely,

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