



Santa Ana Unified School District

Jerry Almendarez
Superintendent of Schools

February 5, 2025

Dear SAUSD Staff,

I want to take a moment to update you on the significant financial challenges facing our district. Due to declining enrollment and the expiration of state and federal COVID relief funds, we are facing substantial budget constraints that require difficult decisions to ensure the district's long-term financial stability.

We must address a structural deficit projected to reach \$187 million this year by implementing significant expenditure reductions and exploring potential revenue increases—both in the current year and over the next two fiscal years. The District has made every effort to distribute these reductions across multiple areas to minimize the impact on staffing. However, with salaries and benefits comprising 80% of our annual expenditures, it is impossible to resolve this deficit without some staffing reductions.

That said, approximately two-thirds of the measures being considered focus on non-staffing areas, with actual layoffs accounting for about one-quarter of the reductions. While we recognize the profound impact these decisions have on our valued employees, we want to emphasize that every effort has been made to protect personnel as much as possible. These measures are critical to aligning our resources with current needs while maintaining the quality of education and services we provide.

After careful consideration and extensive discussions, it has become clear that we must realign our staffing levels with our financial reality and enrollment needs. Initially, we identified the need to reduce approximately 350 certificated positions. However, by implementing a Supplemental Early Retirement Plan (SERP), we were able to reduce the number of necessary reductions in force to approximately 280 positions, which has helped minimize the impact as much as possible. Despite this mitigation, there remain reductions that must take place. Specifically, we anticipate a Reduction in Force that will impact our staff. To further address this, we have extended the SERP to allow for additional participation from certificated bargaining unit members, in hopes that we will lower the number of employees affected by the layoff.

As we navigate these trying times, we want to acknowledge the partnership and collaboration of the Santa Ana Educators' Association (SAEA). Over the past 18 months, we have engaged in ongoing discussions with the union regarding the challenging possibility of layoffs. The union has been in agreement for some time that a reduction in force is necessary, and their input has been instrumental in shaping our decision to implement a supplemental early retirement incentive. Together, we have held numerous meetings to meticulously review the budget and explore strategies to reduce expenditures and enhance revenue, aiming to minimize the impact on supporting our students. The union has also suggested that the district should prioritize retaining services through attrition-based staffing adjustments rather than layoffs. While we have made efforts to follow this approach over the past few years, the results have been minimal with our average attrition at less than 30 employees each year, including 12 retirements—far from the 280 retirements or resignations needed to achieve the necessary reductions.

We value and appreciate the union's commitment to advocating for our educators and working alongside us to explore solutions that prioritize fairness and transparency. At this point in time, it is crucial that the district and our respected labor partner work collaboratively, not divisively, to ensure that our students, families, and employees are supported through this very difficult period.

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While these decisions are never easy, our shared dedication to students and educators alike will guide us forward. We remain committed to open dialogue, collective problem-solving, and ensuring that those impacted receive the support they need.

This decision weighs heavily on us as we recognize the profound contributions each of you makes to our district's success. Your dedication and commitment to high-quality education are deeply valued and this decision is not a reflection of your worth to our school communities. We are committed to managing this process with the utmost respect, care, and compassion, providing detailed information to those impacted in the coming weeks. As we navigate these challenging times, our partnership with the union remains crucial in working collaboratively to support our students, families, and staff.

With sincerity and appreciation,



Jerry Almendarez
Superintendent