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May 13, 2008

Dear Parent or Guardian,

In this year of severe state budget cuts, I made a commitment to keep employees and parents informed about our budget process. Over the last six months, the Sweetwater District has held a series of budget committee meetings and workshops with the Board of Trustees. Each time, members of the community, parents, students and employees provided suggestions for budget reductions.

Last month, a list of potential budget reductions was shared with the community budget advisory committee, the teachers union, the district's classified unions, district management association and Superintendent's cabinet. Each group was asked to prioritize programs to be reduced. This ranked list was voted on by the Board of Trustees on Monday, May 5. For a complete list of budget reductions, please visit the district's website: www.suhsd.k12.ca.us

If the state budget cuts hold, one of the most difficult decisions we may have to make is suspending the \$1.3 million contract with our local police agencies for School Resource Officers to work directly with each of our campuses. None of these police officers is assigned full-time to a specific campus. Each officer is assigned to a number of schools, ranging from two to five.

We are looking at taking \$1 million of the funding we use for School Resource Officers and creating 24 new Campus Assistant positions across the district. These district employees will be responsible for the safety of students and staff of each individual campus. They will not be shared among campuses, as is currently the case with School Resources Officers.

What builds strong and safe campuses are the relationships that are built among adults and students. We believe having dedicated campus assistants helps strengthen those relationships. We will still be able to depend upon police to respond to the most serious safety issues on campus. In fact, one of our partner agencies has pledged to continue providing services regardless of the final state funding.

This is an action we do not take lightly. We have sought to preserve all district jobs. I am proud to say that we are the only district in San Diego County that did not issue a single layoff notice.

Nothing is more important to me than the education and safety of our children. We will continue to keep our schools safe for students and staff.

Sincerely yours,

Jesus M. Gandara, Ed.D.
Superintendent

The Sweetwater Union High School District will fulfill the promise of 100% student success.

"The Sweetwater Union High School District does not discriminate with regard to sex, race, religion, color, national origin, ancestry/ethnicity, marital or parental status, age, physical or mental disability, sexual orientation or any other unlawful consideration.

SUHSD Board Policy # 2224