

“SHARED SACRIFICE!” WHAT DOES IT REALLY MEAN IN THE CCSD?

First of all, it is clear that in the CCSD, “shared sacrifice” does not mean what you and I think it should mean. It does not mean what the Nevada State Legislature thinks it means. The visual image created by the cartoon on the March 4, 2010, Review Journal editorial page captured what it means in the CCSD. If you have not seen that cartoon, it is posted on the CCASAPE web site.

Over the past several months, Superintendent Rulfes has put forward the idea of “shared sacrifice,” where bargaining groups come to the table in a “spirit of cooperation,” and make decisions that will be in the best interests of the District. The Superintendent wants every employee to “give a little.” This “shared sacrifice” concept has been repeated incessantly by the Superintendent and other high ranking District employees. It was said with such frequency that state legislators began to use the phrase, although we know that their definition of what it means is not the same as Superintendent Rulfes.

In reality, “shared sacrifice” is a hollow, disingenuous term created as a sound bite by the Superintendent. In reality, what “shared sacrifice” means for administrators and professional-technical employees in the Clark County School District, is to take a unilateral .5% salary reduction, so that the Superintendent can pay \$5.2 million to cover the PERS increase for 19,000 teachers and the five highest paid confidential employees. Sure, the confidential employees gave up a furlough day, but in reality received a pay increase by having their PERS paid by the Superintendent. The PERS benefit was not entered into the Board minutes so it’s not even clear if Board members knew what they were approving. **Yep, that is definitely a shared sacrifice. They get it! You don’t!**

In reality, what “shared sacrifice” means for members of the CCASAPE bargaining group is to give up through negotiations, the Health Reimbursement Account because the Superintendent says there are not sufficient funds to continue that benefit. CCASAPE agreed to give it up, only to discover that the Superintendent, with Board approval, provided the five highest paid confidential employees with an extraordinarily rich sick leave benefit that resulted in one day of base pay for every five days of accumulated sick leave, providing the Chief Human Resources Officer, for example, with a benefit at retirement or separation in excess of \$43,000. What “shared sacrifice” means to members of the bargaining group is that when they retire or separate from the District, that they will receive \$10 per day for their sick leave, and not from the District, but from the School Administrators Welfare Trust, capped at a maximum of \$2500. **Let’s see, \$43,000 or \$2500! Man, I like this “shared sacrifice” thing.**

Last school year, the District laid off hundreds of support staff employees, causing havoc, upheaval, and hardship in schools and central offices where these dedicated employees worked. The District cut \$120 million from its budget, reduced resources to schools and unilaterally imposed a .5% salary reduction on school police, ESEA members and administrators and professional-technical employees. And, at the same time, in the spirit of “shared sacrifice” (as defined by the Superintendent), quietly negotiated, in closed session and with Board approval, contracts with special perks and cash payments for five confidential employees. (The contracts and the CCASAPE analysis of the contracts, are posted on the CCASAPE web site for your review.)

In the mind of the Superintendent, “shared sacrifice” means that administrators should take a non-paid furlough day when that request is not made of any other bargaining group. **CCASAPE refused to share in that sacrifice.**

Recently, the Superintendent announced that 110-130 administrative positions will be eliminated. “Shared sacrifice” in the CCSD obviously means that over a hundred of the newest administrators will be reduced in force, but at the same time confidential employees received backroom deals worth well over \$100,000...all at the expense of administrative employees who will no longer have their jobs and schools and central offices who will no longer have the valuable services of these newest employees. The Superintendent has also announced that the 540 teaching positions that will be reduced in grades 1, 2, and 3 will be accomplished through attrition with no teacher likely being laid off. Conversely, in the spirit of “shared sacrifice,” the 130 administrative cuts will be hard cuts with administrators losing their positions. By the way, the 130 administrative cuts represent 10% of the administrative work force, while the 540 teaching positions lost through attrition, represent only 2.8% of the teacher work force. **Yep, that’s definitively a “shared sacrifice.” You gotta love it if you’re the Superintendent!**

“Shared sacrifice” in the CCSD means simply that some employees are more valuable than others. And even in times of drastic budget reductions, employee layoffs, and salary reductions, that select employees **receive additional perks and a sweet heart deal.**

But wait! There is yet more! Walt Rulfes publicly announced this past fall that in the spirit of “shared sacrifice” that he was taking a 10% salary reduction of \$30,700. However, what he does not say publicly, is that he has quietly negotiated, with Board approval, contract amendments that provide him with the ability to sell back to the District 20 days of vacation annually. Twenty days at his daily rate of pay (\$1240 per day) is \$24,800. **Yep, that is definitely a shared sacrifice. Good going, Walt!**

In 2007, Walt publicly declined to take the 4% raise that CCASAPE had negotiated for its members. **Yep, Walt was showing leadership. Made everybody feel good!** But the truth is, that year Walt negotiated an additional 15 days of vacation that he could sell, making his net salary increase approximately \$6,000 more than if he had taken the 4% salary increase given to members of the bargaining group. **Do you think we’re stupid, Walt?**

Now, I think I realize what “shared sacrifice” means in the Clark County School District. I don’t like it. It’s not right. It has to stop. It means you do special favors for “special” people because you are the boss and you can do what you want. Besides, those people work harder, so I’ve heard it said, than all of you. It seems that the Assembly Concurrent Resolution was written for the Clark County School District, and the Superintendent in specific. (Copy posted on the CCASAPE web site.) This resolution was written to ensure that employees were treated fairly and equitably – it speaks to shared sacrifice, but a different kind of shared sacrifice than that contemplated by Superintendent Rulfes.

When I expressed my outrage regarding the confidential employees’ special treatment to Superintendent Rulfes on January 27, 2010, in the hallway outside of the CCASAPE office, with my colleague Allin Chandler present, the Superintendent of the fifth largest school district in the country simply said, “Steve, you have to learn to be a better politician. When you smell something that stinks, you just have to learn to hold your nose and turn your head.” In response, I replied to the Superintendent, “Walt, you have said that to me many times over the course of our working relationship. And I’m pleased to say, Walt, I am not like you and I won’t turn my head.”