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Hemphill: Want to help schools? Write a check

By Alan Hemphill

March 12, 2008

California is No. 2 in the nation in teacher salaries (see NEA Web site), No. 27 in total expenses for education (see Census), and No. 48 in academic testing (see National Report Card).

We are obviously not getting our money's worth!

The Poway Unified School District is being asked to take a \$15.5 million reduction in annual income to help offset the \$15-plus billion deficit in the state budget.

The blogs are full of cries from Mothers of America United and their surrogates in the education industry, for whom too much would never be enough.

I like to compare California education with that of Massachusetts, another high-tax state.

California is 27th in spending, but 48th in testing — which means our testing ranks much lower than our spending, while Massachusetts tests at No. 1 while spending at No. 6 — their testing ranks higher than their spending.

That is what I want for California — to get more bang for the buck, not less!

The real problem is state spending in general — it is continually out of control, forcing reductions in current spending as a result of previous spending that should never have occurred.

Clue: There are a lot of people in California who are taking an income reduction. The Poway Unified School District is asked to reduce their budget by less than 10 percent. I can think of many people, many I know personally, including myself, who would love to take only a 10 percent income cut!

The income of everyone associated with the real estate business is down — not just Realtors, but people who work for title companies, escrow companies, pest control companies, remodelers, furniture stores, carpet stores and installers, home inspectors, appraisers and others. That is now producing a trickle-down effect which means car sales are down and restaurant sales are down ... and you want more money because your school is getting less than a 10 percent cut?

Tell me this is Comedy Central, right?

If you think the school is not getting enough money, write a check! I have reviewed the statutes carefully, and there is no prohibition against sending

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your money to the school district. If you have a tax refund check coming, just sign it over and PUSD will be very receptive to spending your money. Please write a check! If you believe your child needs more money, please spend it — just stop asking me to spend more money on a system that performs academically below its spending level.

I was a core adjunct professor of computer science for 14 years. I taught many of today's teachers because many of my courses were core classes required for graduation — both for graduate and undergraduate students — by students in all schools, including the School of Education!

I want and love education! I want it better than it is, and I am convinced that we must reform education. It will be hard to reform it by spending less money, but we also cannot reform it by continuing to throw money at a failing system. In the current economic climate, we have no option but to reduce spending, not only on education but on everything.

If you disagree, write a check.

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