

## Guidance for Parents regarding “Work to Rule”

Dear Bonita Parents,

You have probably noticed teachers’ communications, flyers or leaflets about contract negotiations between the District and the Sweetwater Education Association. You may have also seen or heard that teachers are now engaging in a “**work to rule**” campaign. Here is some information on what this means.

### **What is “work to rule?”**

"Work to rule" is a term used to describe a strategy used by unions to put pressure on employers during negotiations. It means that teachers who are sympathetic to the union’s position in negotiations perform only the minimum amount of work required by the negotiated contract, District policies and regulations, and past practice (in other words, “working to the rules”). Most teachers routinely work beyond their minimum required work day to meet with parents and to participate in non-mandatory school-related activities. During difficult labor contract negotiations, however, unions ask teachers to withhold these additional, voluntary services.

In general, when teachers work to rule, they are engaged in what is called “protected activity”, meaning it is protected under collective bargaining laws. Since this activity is legally protected, employees may not be disciplined or discriminated against because of their decision to participate in them. What is not legally protected, however, is a refusal by teachers to continue to perform required (versus voluntary) duties. Teachers who refuse to perform required duties can be disciplined.

### **What parents can expect.**

Until negotiations-related issues are settled, parents can expect to see teachers handing out leaflets, attending Board meetings, and participating in other activities – including work to rule - intended to put pressure on the Board. It is important to remember that in difficult negotiations, emotions can run high; sometimes the statements made by unions in leaflets or speeches, etc., are intentionally “dramatic” in order to generate support. For this reason, it is important to listen to both sides carefully, including checking in often with the District website at [www.sweetwaterschools.org](http://www.sweetwaterschools.org)

Parents can also expect to see teachers declining to perform voluntary duties – those beyond what is required. If the duties no longer being performed are truly voluntary, parents should understand that teachers are legally entitled to “work to rule” in this manner. However, if teachers refuse to perform required duties, this is not permissible activity. Please notify me as soon as possible if you believe a teacher is refusing to perform what you believe is a required duty.

Finally, parents can expect that there will be a contract settlement. Many districts go through tough negotiations, but one fact is not open to dispute: Negotiations always

settle, and a contract is always reached. Sometimes it just takes a little longer to get there. In the meantime, rest assured that our students will continue to receive the high quality education we have always provided. While some course specific tutoring may be temporarily unavailable, any student is welcome to attend our general tutoring session program known as ARC (Academic Recovery Center) in the cafeteria from 2:30 to 4:30 PM Monday through Thursday. Also available for your interest, we can provide you with a list of AP/IB senior students who can provide private tutoring services after school. Rates are set by the individual student and vary.

Questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely yours in education,

Bettina E. Batista